

**THE FEAST OF
THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
IN THE
CHALDEAN AND MALABAR
LITURGICAL YEAR**

A Study of the Sources

Peter Kuruthukulangara

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To the Loving Memory of my Parents

PREFACE

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord is the liturgical anamnesis of the mystery of the incarnation and the celebration of the birthday of the Risen Lord as well as of our own redemption accomplished in and through him. A proper understanding of the liturgy of this feast in a particular liturgical tradition demands a searching into the sources from which it springs. I hope this book, the result of the doctoral dissertation defended in the faculty of "Oriental Ecclesiastical Sciences" at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, on May 29, 1987, will provide the Churches concerned with the indispensable knowledge of what is their own in view of further renewal and adaptation.

This study is the result of the encouragement and help of many. I thank them all. My thanks are due in a special way to Mar Joseph Irimpen, bishop of Palghat (India) who sent me to pursue my studies in Rome, and to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches which provided me with the necessary scholarship. I thank His Eminence Simon Cardinal Lourdsamy, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, who granted me subsidy to partially meet the printing expenses of this work; my sincere thanks are also due to Msgr George Mifsud in the same Congregation, for his love and constant encouragement. I express my gratitude to Fr Michaelangelo OCD, Rector, Istituto San Giovanni Damasceno, where I stayed for more than five years, for his care and concern and encouragement. I thank all my Professors, especially those of the liturgical section of the Oriental Sciences Faculty of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome.

With a heart replete with joy and satisfaction, I would like to place on record my lasting debt and gratitude towards Professor Rev. Peter Yousif, the first director of this doctoral thesis, without whose assistance and constant encouragement

this work would not have reached the present 'moment of truth'. He helped me in every way possible with his availability, genuine interest in my work and expert direction in all its way. His assistance was inestimable and highly valued and appreciated as sign of his scholarship and friendship. I thank with all my heart Professor Rev. Robert Taft S. J., the second director of this work, for his competent guidance and insights, giving me valuable suggestions and accurate corrections with regard to its content and its language. The great service of both of them as the directors of my dissertation will be remembered with profound gratitude for many years to come. I express my sincere thanks to Professor Edward Hambye S. J. for his kind service as the relator of my thesis. I say a special word of thanks to Rev. Frs Shamon Yoshya Lazar and Jacob Yasso who helped me in the process of translation from the Syriac.

I wish to express my thanks to Rev. Dr Joseph Koikakudy, former Rector of St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Rev. Dr Mathew Vellanickal, President of the Paurastya Vidhyapitham (Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies), Rev. Dr Xavier Koodapuzha, director of the Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications and Rev. Dr Wilson Ukken, Vadavathoor, Kottayam (India), for their kind undertaking of the publication of my thesis and for their valuable suggestions and help. My sincere thanks are also due to the Manager and staff of the St Joseph's Press Mannanam (Kottayam, India) for their earnestness and cooperation in the printing of this work. I thank sincerely all those who, in India and abroad, have in one way or other helped me bring this work to its completion.

July 3, 1989

Fr. Peter Kuruthukulangara

Dukrana of St Thomas the Apostle.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Analecta Bollandiana
ACO	Ed. SCHWARTZ, <i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> , Berlin and Leipzig 1914 ff.
AER	American Ecclesiastical Review
ALW	Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ARSI	Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu
BO	J. S. ASSEMANI, <i>Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticanae de Scriptoribus Syris</i> , 3 vols, Romae 1719-1728.
ByzZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CCL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CCO	Codificazione Canonica Orientale
CNis	Des Heiligen EPHRAEM DES SYRERS <i>Carmina Nisibena</i> , ed. E. BECK, CSCO 218/219; Syr. 92/93, Louvain 1961, CSCO 240/241; Syr. 102/103, Louvain 1963.
CO	Christian Orient
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
DACL	F. CABROL, H. LECLERQ, eds., <i>Dictionnaire d'Archéologie et de Liturgie</i>
Diatessaron	Saint EPHREM, <i>Commentaire du Diatessaron ou de l'Evangile Concordant</i> , trans. L. LELOIR, SC 121, Paris 1966.
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
DS	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité
DTC	Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, Paris 1906 ff.
ECR	Eastern Churches Review
EL	Ephemerides Liturgicae
EM	Etudes Mariales
EO	Echos d'Orient
ET	English Translation
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte

HEccl	Des Heiligen EPHRAEM DES SYRERS Hymnen de Ecclesia, ed. and trans. E. BECK, CSCO 198/199; Syr. 84/85, Louvain 1960.
HFid	Des Heiligen EPHRAEM DES SYRERS Hymnen de Fide, ed. and trans. E. BECK, CSCO 15/155; Syr. 63/74, Louvain 1955.
HNat	Des Heiligen EPHRAEM DES SYRERS Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania), ed. and trans. E. BECK, CSCO 186/187; Syr. 82/83, Louvain 1959.
HResur	Des Heiligen EPHRAEM DES SYRERS Paschahymnen, ed. and trans. E. BECK, CSCO 248/249; Syr. 108/109, Louvain 1964.
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
ITQ	Irish Theological Quarterly
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JLH	Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie
JLW	Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
LF	Liturgiegeschichtliche Forschungen
LMD	La Maison-Dieu
LO	Lex Orandi
LQF	Liturgiegeschichtliche Quellen und Forschungen
LTK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche
LXX	The Septuagint Greek OT
MANSI	J. D. MANSI, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, Florence 1759–1798
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae historica
MHSJ	Monumenta historica Societatis Jesu
Mus	Le Muséon
NELSON	A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, ed. R. C. FULLER, Nelson, New and Fully Revised Edition, New York 1975.
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series I and II, Michigan 1969.
OC	Oriens Christianus
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
OS	L'Orient Syrien
OT	Old Testament

ParL	Paroisse et Liturgie
ParOr	Parole de l'Orient
PG	MIGNE, Patrologia Greca
PIOS	Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Rome
PL	MIGNE, Patrologia Latina
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
POC	Proche-Orient Chrétien
PS	Patrologia Syriaca
RB	Revue biblique
RBén	Revue bénédictine
RCA	Revue du Clergé africaine.
REA	Revue des Etudes anciennes
RHLR	Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuse
RHPR	Revue d'Histoire de Philosophie religieuse.
RL	Rivista liturgica
ROC	Revue de l'Orient Chrétien
RSPT	Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques.
RSR	Recherches de Science religieuse.
RU	M. COHEN, ed., Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen, 3 vols., Bonn 1889-1899.
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SCW	Studies in Christian Worship
SDN	Des Heiligen EPHRAEM DES SYRERS Sermo de Domino Nostro, ed., E. BECK, CSCO 270/271; Syr. 116/117, Louvain 1966.
StL	Studia liturgica
StZ	Stimmen der Zeit
TL	Theologische Literaturzeitung
TS	Theological Studies
VOHD	Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland
VSH	Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften
ZKG	Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte
ZkTh	Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie
ZWT	Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie

LIST OF MANUSCRIPTS

Ms A	Brit. Mus. Add. 7177 (1484 A.D)
Ms B	Vat. Borg. Syr. 150 (15th century)
Ms C	Vat. Syr. 83 (1538 A.D)
Ms D	Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 25 (1598 AD)
Ms E	Vat. Syr 86 (16th century)
Ms F	Camb. Add. 1981 (1607 A.D)
Ms G	Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 27 (1681 A.D)
Ms H	Berlin Or. Quarto 1160 (1686 A.D)
Ms I	Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 21 (16th/17th century)
Ms J	Vat. Syr. 574 (1721 A.D)
Ms K	Athens: National Library 1802 (1724 A.D)
Ms L	Brit. Mus. Or. 4399 (1488/89 A D)
Ms M	Berlin Or. fol. 620 (1537 A.D)
Ms N	Brit. Mus. Add. 7178 (1544/45 A D)
Ms O	Vat. Syr. 590 (16th century)
Ms P	Mingana Syriac 542 (1601 A.D)
Ms Q	Houghton Syriac 142 (1666 A.D)
Ms R	Vat. Borg. Syr. 60 (1688 A.D)
Ms S	Vat. Borg. Syr. 86 (17th century ?)
Ms T	Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 14 (1707 A.D)
Ms U	Camb. Add. 1980 (1723 A.D)
Ms V	Berlin Or. fol. 3181 (1778 A.D)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Background and Scope of this Study

The Second Vatican Council in the Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches states:

All Eastern rite members should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their lawful liturgical rites and their established way of life, and that these should not be altered except by way of an appropriate and organic development (n. 6).

The Council, further, recommends that Eastern Catholics who have abandoned their own traditions return to them:

If they have improperly fallen away from them because of circumstances of time or personage, let them take pains to return to their ancestral ways (n. 6).

The Council is not satisfied to declare the legitimacy and the obligation of preserving Eastern liturgical traditions and discipline; it wants to restore to primitive purity Eastern liturgical traditions which to a greater or lesser extent have been latinized, without, however, thereby impeding appropriate adaptation and organic evolution. The Council thus obliges the Eastern rites to return to their genuine tradition, and to look to the future.

It is a known fact that the Syro-Malabar liturgy had been greatly latinized.¹ The reform and restoration of the Syro-Malabar liturgy to its primitive purity and authentic tradition demands first and foremost a searching into the sources and the re-appropriation of what is one's own, because any adaptation or innovation "should in some way grow organically from forms

1. See below, Excursus in Chapter IV.

already existing.’’² This searching into the sources is both the aim and limit of our present work.

There are studies already available on the liturgical year and calendar of the Chaldean and Malabar tradition in general,³ but few with emphasis on liturgical year.⁴ Quite recently there has appeared a source-study on the first of the nine seasons of the East Syrian liturgical year, the Annunciation-Nativity.⁵ Our present work is on the feast of the Nativity of Christ, the culmination of that preparatory period in the East Syrian liturgical year.

We hope that this study on the sources of the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity will assist all the Churches of East Syrian tradition in general, and the Syro-Malabar Church in particular, to which the author belongs, in their efforts ‘‘to return to their ancestral tradition,’’ but with a view to further adaptation, based on sound tradition, so that these Churches might receive ‘‘new vigour to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times.’’⁶

2. Source and Method of this Study

The primary source of our study is the Syriac *Breviarium iuxta Ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, first edited in 1886–1887 in three volumes by Paul Bedjan and reissued in 1938 by the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Rome, for the use of the Chaldean and Malabar Catholics. The propers of the office and Mass for the feast of the Nativity are found in its first volume.

2. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 23.

3. MACLEAN, *Offices*; MOLITOR *Chaldaisches Brevier*; NILLES, *Kirchenjahr*; *Kalendarium* II, 647–688; BURKITT, *Lectiary*; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*; PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*.

4. PODIPARA, *Libri liturgici*; VELLIAN, *Qurbana*; PAYNGOT, *The Cross*; *Aradhanavalsaram*; PATHIKULANGARA, *Liturgical Year*; *Resurrection*. The *Ordo celebrationis*, 43–70, lectionary for the whole year and *Supplementum Mysteriorum*, propers of the Mass for the whole year, published by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Rome, for the use of the Syro-Malabar Catholics are of great importance in this respect.

5. MOOLAN, *Annunciation*.

6. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 4.

The method used in our work is historical, analytical and theological. The first chapter presents briefly the history of the origins of the feast of the Nativity of Christ. The second chapter provides a literal English translation from the Syriac of the propers of the office and Mass for this feast, in order to give the non-Syriac reader access to the liturgical texts. The third chapter is a historical study of the evolution of the East Syrian propers of the office and Mass for the feast of the Nativity, by examining all the available manuscripts of the East Syrian tradition. Here we have had recourse to a comparative method of study, 1) collating all the variants of the propers of this feast in use at present among the Chaldean and Malabar and Nestorian rites, and 2) comparing them with the variants of twenty-two Syriac manuscripts of European, Indian and U. S. collections. The fourth chapter analyses the main constituent elements of the propers of the office and Mass for the feast, in view of the theological synthesis that forms the content of the fifth chapter. There we present the theology of the basic themes celebrated on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord in the Chaldean and Malabar tradition. An *excursus* given in the fourth chapter describes the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity among the Thomas Christians of Malabar before and after the synod of Diamper (1599), which played a conspicuous role in latinizing the liturgy then in use in the Malabar Church.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGIN OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

I. Some Antecedents

In the absence of any conclusive evidence to establish the historical date of the birth of Christ, early Christians exposed themselves to sometimes fantastic, often contradictory hypotheses in determining this date. But the early Christians did not have the idea of celebrating liturgically the anniversary of the birth of Christ. What interested them most was Christ's death and resurrection, the glorious victory of Christ's passage from death to life. Thus, Pascha was for them the first and greatest liturgical feast, celebrated with all festivity, after a spiritual preparation of penance and fasting. It is in this sense that the Church of the first centuries celebrated the anniversaries of the *death* of her martyrs, and not the day of their *birth*.¹

This does not mean, however, that nobody in the first centuries was interested in the chronology of Jesus' life. Around the year 200, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I, 21, 145, 6, speaks of the determination of the exact date of Jesus' birth as difficult, and jeers at the Egyptian theologians: "And there are those who have determined not only the year of our Lord's birth, but also the day; and they say it took place in the 28th year of Augustus, and on the 25th day of Paschon." The 25th day of Paschon according to the Alexandrian calendar is May 20.²

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1. CABROL, *Annonciation*, 2243; CULLMANN, *Noel*, 15-16; GUNSTON, *Christmas*, 23; MEYER, *Weihnachtsfest*, 5; USENER, *Weihnachtsfest*, 13ff.
 2. PASCHER, *Das liturgische Jahr*, 328; FENDT, *Der heutige Stand*, 4, n. 5.

Another document, *De Pascha Computus* published in 243, and falsely attributed to St Cyprian, fixes the date of the birth of Jesus on March 28, the day of annual spring equinox, when God separated light and darkness in equal duration. It says that, according to the creation narrative given in the Book of Genesis, God created the sun on the 4th day, that is, on March 28. Thus Christ too, who is the 'Sun of Justice' (Mal 4:2), came necessarily into this world on this date,³ which according to the Julian calendar is March 24⁴ and therefore, supposing of course a confusion between the date of the Incarnation and the Nativity, would be fairly reconciled with his being born on December 25. But Cyprian tells neither of any tradition nor of any source of that March date.

In his *Commentary on Daniel* IV, 23, Hippolytus gives the date of Jesus' birth on December 25, a Wednesday in the year 42 of Augustus.⁵ But the general tendency of opinion expressed since the discovery of this document has been to regard this passage as interpolated,⁶ and even if one would accept this recently discovered passage as authentic, the mere mention of the date of the Nativity in Hippolytus does not give us any right to conclude that the feast of the Nativity existed in the early third century.⁷

All these diverse calculations show that in the first three centuries not only was there no certain tradition regarding the exact date of Jesus' birth, but also that the Church did not celebrate it at all. It is one thing to search for the exact date of Jesus' birth, and quite another to ask when one began to feast the event of Jesus' birth in christendom. Our purpose in this chapter is to find the answer to the later, not to the former.

3. HARTEL (ed.), CSEL III, 3, 266.

4. CULLMANN, *Noel*, 11-12; ENGBERDING, *Der Dezember* 25, 26; HOLLARD, *Les origines* 257; TALLEY, *Origins*, 90-91.

5. BONWETSCH, *Hippolytus Werke* I, 242.

6. BRATKE, *Die Lebenszeit Christi*, 129-176; HILGENFELD, *Die Zeiten der Geburt*, 257-281; BARDENHEWER, *Patrologie* V, 1, 269; KELLNER, *Heortologie*, 104-105; DUCHESNE, *Christian Worship*, 258; THURSTON, *Christmas*, 565; HANSSENS, *La liturgie*, 270-282. But LAGARDE, *Altes und Neues*, 326, apparently admits the genuineness of this passage.

7. McARTHUR, *Christian Year*, 43; TALLEY, *Origins*, 86.

II. Epiphany—The Feast of the Nativity in the East

Epiphany, the feast of the manifestation of Christ is undoubtedly of Eastern origin as is indicated by the very Greek term *Epiphaneia*. St Augustine has spoken of it as of Eastern provenance.⁸ The birth of Christ being the manifestation of God among men, the feast of the Epiphany on January 6 in its original form was purely the feast of the Nativity of Christ in the East, the theme of baptism of Christ being added to it only later.⁹ According to Bainton, the feast of the Epiphany in the East is earlier than the Council of Nicea in 325 A. D., and January 6 as the birthday of Christ was held by the orthodox Christians as well as Basilidians, Montanists and Marcionists even in the acute christological controversies. It therefore antedates these schisms and goes back to the beginning of the second century.¹⁰ McArthur too suggests such an early dating as the beginning of the first century for the feast of the birth of Christ on January 6, arguing for a unitive festival of the incarnation and baptism at Ephesus on January 6, marking the beginning of a course reading of Jn 1:1–2:11 with its themes of the birth of light and the conversion of water and wine, which, according to him, was written against the background of the festival of Epiphany.¹¹

The most ancient allusion to the assignment of the Nativity of Christ to January 6, though not as a liturgical festival, is found in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I, 21, 145. He says that Christ was born in the 28th year of Augustus (3/2 B. C) and 194 years, 1 month and 13 days before the death of Commodus on December 31, 192. Bainton, interpreting the interval between the death of Commodus in A. D 192 and the birth of Christ in

8. *In Epiphania Domini*, 202, 5; PL 38, 1033; cf. also MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 653; CULLMANN, *Noel*, 5.

9. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 81ff.; McArthur's view is that the original feast of the Epiphany had both the themes of the birth and baptism of Christ; cf. *Christian Year* 56ff. But for Mohrmann, the development that led Epiphany into a baptismal feast was only secondary; cf. *Epiphania*, 653.

10. BAINTON, *Epiphany*, 26–38.

11. McARTHUR, *Christian Year*, 67–69. But then, the question why the miracle of Cana was added to the feast of the Epiphany remains unanswered; cf. TALLEY, *Histoische Elemente*, 109.

Bethlehem as indicated by Clement on the basis of the earlier Egyptian calendar of only 365 days, and for that making use of Schram's table,¹² has shown that the date of Christ's birth was January 6 in the 28th year of Augustus, as Clement said.¹³

This date is again supported by other data given by Clement himself (*Stromata* I, 21, 146). He writes:

The followers of Basilides celebrated the day of his baptism also, spending the night before in reading. They say that it was the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, the fifteenth of the month Tybi, but some the eleventh of the same month.¹⁴

According to the stabilized Alexandrian calendar, 11 Tybi is January 6, on which date the Basilidian community of Alexandria celebrated the baptism of Christ.¹⁵ However, according to Talley, the variation in the date of the Basilidian celebration can be due to the ancient Egyptian calendar of 365 days followed perhaps by the Basilidian community outside the city which celebrated the baptism on 15 Tybi, which was January 6 according to that earlier Egyptian *annus vagus*.¹⁶

According to another source, January 6 had been in the Egyptian calendar the day of the winter solstice and was considered to be the day of the birth of the god Dionysius, known as Aion or Osiris, born from the virgin Kore.¹⁷ There are authors who hold that the Christian celebration on that date (January 6) was derived from this pagan feast of the birth of the Aion.¹⁸ However, after having examined all the possible evidence in favour of establishing a pagan background for the celebration of Epiphany on January 6, Talley states that,

12. SCHRAM; *Tafeln*; cf. also BAINTON, *Chronology*.

13. BAINTON, *Epiphany*, 37; cf. also TALLEY, *Origins*, 118-119.

14. ET from TALLEY, *Origins*, 119.

15. RAHNER, *Mythes grecs*, 158-159; THIBAUT, *L'epiphanie*, 282-283; VACANDARD, *Les fetes*, 19; DUCHESNE, *Culte chretien*, 273.

16. TALLEY, *Origins*, 119.

17. EPIPHANIUS; *Panarion haer.* 51, 22, 3-11

18. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 67ff.; BAINTON, *Epiphany*, 24ff.; NORDEN, *Die Geburt*, 35; LIETZMANN, *Geschichte*, 328; STRITTMATTER, *Christmas*, 620; PRUMM, *Zur Entstehung*, 209; FENDT, *Der heutige Stand*, 2.

there is no ... meaningful basis for the association of the Julian date, January 6, with any festival connected with the winter solstice in the twentieth-century before Christ. Such winter solstice festivals may have existed in Egyptian antiquity, but they could not for long be associated with any fixed date in that wandering calendar.¹⁹

It is from St Ephrem (d. 373) that we have an earliest evidence for the existence of the celebration of the Nativity of Christ in the East on January 6.²⁰

III. Nativity on December 25 – A Feast of Western Origin

The feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25 is certainly of Western and probably of Roman origin.²¹ The first and most ancient testimony for the observance of the feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25 is for Rome and it is found in the calendar of Furius Dionysius Philocalus, of the year 354.²² It contains two lists of death-dates, one of the Roman bishops (*Depositio Episcoporum*) and the other of martyrs (*Depositio Martyrum*). We read at the beginning of the *Depositio Martyrum* thus:

VIII kal. Ian. natus Christus in Betleem Iudee

From both of these lists it is concluded that by the year 354 the feast of the Nativity of Christ existed at Rome and it was the beginning of the liturgical year. Comparing this above evidence from the *Depositio Martyrum* with the chronological order of the death-dates of the bishops given in the *Depositio Episcoporum* which is generally accepted to be of the year 336, Duchesne concludes that by the year 336 the feast of the Nativity of Christ was celebrated in Rome on December 25.²³ According to Talley, from that year at Rome the Nativity of Christ on

19. TALLEY, *Origins*, 111.

20. HNat. V, 13; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 48.

21. LEMARIE, *Manifestation*, 27.

22. MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi* IX (part 1; 1892), 13–196; DENIS-BOULET, *Le Calendrier*, 54–55. According to KELLNER, *Heortologie*, 105–106, this chronograph has undergone later corrections.

23. DUCHESNE, *Bulletin Critique* XI, 41ff.

December 25 marked the beginning of the liturgical year and it is also the earliest clear and certain datum for the celebration of the feast of the Nativity.²⁴

Usener's view is that the anniversary of Christ's birth was celebrated in Rome as late as the year 353 on January 6, the very day of the baptism of Christ on the day of the Epiphany, and December 25 was solemnized as a feast for the first time only in 354.²⁵ Lietzmann, even though he says that the cradle of the feast of Nativity on December 25 is undoubtedly Rome, where it was already celebrated under emperor Constantine before the year 336 as a 'thanksgiving prayer' for his victory, holds that the Eastern feast of the Epiphany already existed in Rome as the feast of the Nativity of Christ even before the feast on December 25 was introduced there.²⁶

The text on which Usener has based his opinion is the sermon, preached in St Peter's basilica, Rome, by Pope Liberius (352-366) on the occasion of the religious profession of Marcellina, sister of St Ambrose in the year 353 on *natalis salvatoris* and in which are found the themes of Epiphany.²⁷ But this sermon has been proved to be the work not of Liberius, but of Ambrose himself and hence it can at the most be an evidence only for Milan, and not for Roman practice.²⁸ According to some authors, this sermon is not a proof at all that St Ambrose celebrated the feast of the Nativity of Christ at Milan on January 6.²⁹ Likewise Lietzmann's opinion of priority of the Nativity feast on January 6 in Rome over the one on December 25 is groundless: according to him, the texts of the Roman Mass Book for the feast of the Epiphany (Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries, as well as the modern Missal) are clearly adaptations of the old Roman celebrations of the Nativity of Christ on January 6, which is earlier than the feast of December 25.³⁰ This view too is judged untenable, as these very Epiphany texts of the sacramentaries could

24. TALLEY, *Origins*, 85-86.

25. USENER, *Weihnachtsfest*, 281; cf. also HOLL, *Der Ursprung*, 133.

26. LIETZMANN, *Geschichte*, 326-329.

27. *De virginibus* III, 1-14; cf. PL 16, 231ff.

28. CASPAR, *Kleine Beiträge*, 346; KLEIN; *Meletemata* 9-15, referred to in FRANK, *Frühgeschichte*, 12; MISCHELS, *Die Ansprache*, 106ff.

29. FRANK, *Zur Geschichte*, 145-155; CASPAR, *Kleine Beiträge*, 346-355.

30. LIETZMANN, *Geschichte*, 326; *Petrus und Paulus*, 79, 103-105.

very well be adaptations of the earlier texts of the feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25.³¹

Now, if Rome never celebrated the feast of the Nativity of Christ on January 6, but feasted it from the very beginning only on December 25,³² what was the reason behind the choice of this particular date?

A. Computation Hypothesis

According to Duchesne,³³ the December 25 for the feast of the Nativity of Christ was reached by the independent calculation which is known as the 'computation hypothesis'.³⁴ This hypothesis, which is further developed and strongly defended by Engberding,³⁵ takes as its point of departure the ancient belief that Christ died on the vernal equinox, that is, on the March 25, the very day God created the world. Since in Christ's life-span every mode of imperfection caused by any fractional number was excluded, he must also have begun his life on March 25. Thus the early Christians calculated the conception of Christ to have taken place on March 25 and consequently, counting nine months ahead, his birth on December 25.³⁶

A fourth century work of an anonymous author (sometimes attributed to St John Chrysostom), entitled *De solstitia et aequinoctia conceptionis et nativitatis domini iesu christi et iohannis baptistae*, more briefly designated *De solstitiis et aequinoctiis*, edited by Bernard Botte,³⁷ has these very same ideas: since Christ is the true Sun, it was reasonable that the beginning of his life coincide with the high point of the solar year. Hence Christ must have been conceived on March 25 and born on December 25. The anonymous author of this document tries to prove this

31. MARSILI, I *Sacramentari*, 355-358; CAPELLE, *La main de S. Gregoire*, 21-23; FRANK, *Weihnachten*, 985-986; MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 660-661.

32. FRANK, *Weihnachten*, 985.

33. DUCHESNE, *Culte chretien*, 250ff.

34. FENDT, *Der heutige Stand*, 3.

35. ENGBERDING, *Der Dezember 25*, 25-43.

36. DUCHESNE, *Culte chretien* 275-279; Tertullian is, for Duchesne, the ancient author to assign March 25 as the date of Christ's death; cf. *Adversus Iudaeos* VIII, 18, ANF III, 160; see also Augustine's *De Trinitate* IV, 5, NPNF (first series), III, 74.

37. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 88-105.

from scriptural data: the announcement to Zecharia of John the Baptist's conception happened on the great day of Atonement, that is, at the autumnal equinox, and consequently his birth took place at the summer solstice. Thus, since Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy when Gabriel announced to Mary Jesus' conception (Lk 1:36), it follows that Jesus' conception was six months after the Baptist's conception, that is, at the spring equinox. Consequently, Jesus' birth took place nine months later, at the winter solstice.³⁸

Behind all this coincidence of the beginning of Jesus' earthly life with the beginning of the sun's new career, Engberding tries to see the work of God's providence:

Anyone who has entered into the mentality of third-fourth century Christians will have no difficulty understanding how the symbolic power of Christ's birth on the day of the winter solstice could exalt all hearts. Here indeed was the 'hand of God'! Here was his own seal made evident in the midst of human calculations! What more fitting choice could divine Providence have made than a day so freighted with symbolisms? ... I do not hesitate to say that the triumphant radiance of the symbolic data contains the real mystery of the triumphant entry into the world which the feast of Christmas represents.³⁹

B. *History of Religions Hypothesis*

Contrary to the 'computation hypothesis', another explanation for the choice of December 25 for the feast of the Nativity of Christ is provided by Hieronymus Frank,⁴⁰ and before him by Herman Usener,⁴¹ Karl Holl,⁴² Hans Lietzmann⁴³ and Bernard Botte.⁴⁴ This favoured explanation of the origin of the feast of

38. TALLEY, *Origins*, 93-94; *Liturgical Time*, 40; JUNGSMANN, *Early Liturgy*, 147.

39. ENGBERDING, *Der Dezember 25*, 42; ET from ADAM, *Liturgical Year*, 123-124.

40. FRANK, *Fruhgeschichte*, 1-24.

41. USENER, *Weihnachtsfest*, 348-368.

42. HOLL, *Der Ursprung*, 123-154.

43. LIETZMANN, *Geschichte*, 321-329.

44. BOTTE, *Les origines*.

the Nativity throughout the 19th and 20th centuries⁴⁵ is called today the 'history of religions' hypothesis⁴⁶ which explains the feast of the Nativity on December 25 as a christianization of the solar festival of the year 274 in Rome, the *dies natalis solis invicti*: the birthday of the unconquered sun. It was Emperor Aurelian who introduced this feast in Rome after his victory over Palmyra in 274, with the intention of introducing one uniform religion for the entire empire with the *Sol Invictus* as the principal god. He built a huge temple in honour of the sun god in the Campus Martius and dedicated December 25, converting it to a national holiday to celebrate the feast in worship of this sun god.⁴⁷ This pagan worship became so strong as to become a menace to Christianity. Pope Leo the Great (440-446) had to fight against the influence of this pagan worship on Christians of his time. He was to observe them worshipping the sun on the steps leading to St Peter's basilica in Rome. He says in his seventh nativity sermon: "before entering the Blessed Apostle Peter's basilica, which is dedicated to the One Living and True God, when they have mounted the steps which lead to the raised platform, they turn around and bow themselves towards the rising sun and with bent neck do homage to its brilliant robe."⁴⁸

Primitive Christians considered the rising sun to be the symbol of the coming of the Lord, not only who was the "Sun of Justice" in the words of the Prophet (Mal 4:2), but also who had declared "I am the Light of the world" (Jn 8:12; 9:5) and whom his disciples preached as "the Light of the world, that enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9). As the actual historical date of the birth of Christ was unknown, it was quite reasonable and appropriate that the feast of the birth of Christ the true Light

45. TALLEY, *Liturgical Time*, 39.

46. FENDT, *Der heutige Stand*, 3.

47. The feast of the *natalis solis invicti* on December 25 is marked in the civil calendar of the Philocalian collection thus: *VIII kal. Ian. N. Invicti C. M. XXX*; cf. MOMMSEN, *Corpus* I, 1, 278; DENIS-BOULET, *Le calendrier*: 51-52; NOIRVILIE, *Les origines*, 145-176; VACANDARD, *Les fetes*, 17, n. 7; NORDEN, *Die Geburt*, 27-28; MILES, *Christmas*, 23-24; HOLLARD, *Les origines*, 264. But even before Aurelian established the celebration of the sun god, we have traces of earlier manifestations of the worship of sun at Rome; cf. HALSBERGHE, *The Cult*, referred to in TALLEY, *Origins*, 88.

48. Sermo XXVII, PL 54, 218ff.; ET from NPNF (second series), XII, 140.

be instituted on December 25, the day of the birth of the 'Unconquered Sun', especially in a place where there existed already a feast of the kind on that particular date.⁴⁹

According to Anton Baumstark, the feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25, originated in Rome, was the christianization of the *dies natalis solis invicti*, and further, it was not a feast of a particular historical event, but an expression of a great 'religious idea', the idea of *homoosius* in other words, it was a feast of the Nicene dogma, a feast of Christ's eternal birth rather than of the human birth of the Word of God from the womb of the virgin Mary.⁵⁰ Oscar Cullmann, too, cherishes almost the same idea: not the historical event of Christ's birth or a particular date that the early Christians wanted to celebrate, but the very reality of the 'manifestation of Christ on the earth'. He writes:

From the moment in which theological thought, beginning from the faith in the crucified and risen Lord, and directing its attention to the person and work of Christ, looked at the background, the incarnation must have moved more and more clearly into the foreground.⁵¹

Apart from the apologetical factors that influenced the institution of the feast, because of their light symbolism and equally because of the tendency to fix chronologically, by means of certain calculations, the salvific acts in the annual cycle where certain determined dates as that of equinox played an important role, the Church accepted the ancient forms offered by the pagan cult and infused them with new life and meaning.⁵²

Even though the derivation of the feast of the Nativity from *natalis solis invicti* rests upon conjecture, that association has gained great popularity in the literature, especially because a Roman public celebration on December 25 coincided with a Christian celebration at the same place and on the same date. This suggests naturally some interplay between the two celebrations, and therefore, the 'history of religions' hypothesis cannot

49. DOLGER, *Die Sonne*, 109; PASCHER, *Das liturgische Jahr*, 329.

50. BAUMSTARK, *Liturgie comparee*, 164, 171-172; *Rites et fetes*, 502ff.

51. CULLMANN, *Noel*, 16; cf. also TAFT, *Historicism*, 105.

52. MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 664.

be disregarded as mere conjecture. At the same time we are to give equal attention to other evidence independent of the hypothesis, such as that of Tertullian's *Adversus Iudaeos* VIII, 18, Augustine's *De Trinitate* IV, 5 and of the *De solistiliis et aequinoctiis*⁵³ which identify the dates of the annunciation and passion as March 25, which also leads us to date the Nativity on December 25.⁵⁴

1. North Africa

The first information we have of the existence of the feast of the Nativity on December 25 in North Africa is from a nativity sermon of Optatus of Milevis (d. ca 392) delivered on December 25, 362 or 363.⁵⁵ In this document we see together with the theme of the birth of Christ, two other themes, namely the adoration of the Magi and, though minor, the massacre of the innocents. From the fact that Rome and North Africa had very close relations in ancient times, and from the report of Optatus of Milevis, it can be concluded that the celebration of the feast of December 25, with its themes of the birth of Christ and the adoration of the Magi, existed in Rome and Africa before the adoption of the Eastern feast of the Epiphany there.⁵⁶

St Augustine in one of his Epiphany sermons accuses the Donatists around the year 412 because they do not celebrate with the Catholics the Eastern feast of the Epiphany on January 6, as they do not love unity and communion with the Eastern Churches:

With good reason have the heretical Donatists never wished to celebrate this day with us: they neither love unity, nor are they in communion with the Eastern Church where that star appeared. Let us, however, celebrate the Manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on which He harvested the first fruits of the Gentiles, in the unity of the Gentiles.⁵⁷

53. See 7, notes 36 & 37.

54. TALLEY, *Origins*, 102-103.

55. WILLMART, *Un sermon*, 271-302.

56. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 39; MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 662; LEMARIE, *Manifestation*, 29; STRITTMATTER, *Christmas*, 608.

57. *In Epiphania Domini*, 202, 5; cf. PL 38, 1033; ET from TALLEY, *Origins* 86.

This significant statement of Augustine and his evident silence about the feast of the Nativity on December 25 has led some to assert the existence of the feast on December 25 in Africa before the Donatists separated themselves from the Catholics in 311, sometimes even pushing its Roman origin back to the reign of emperor Aurelian (270-275).⁵⁸

It becomes evident, however, from Augustine's statement above, that he accused the Donatists for not celebrating the feast of the Epiphany on January 6. We know further from the aforementioned sermon of Optatus of Milevis, that there existed in Africa the celebration of the feast of the Nativity before the introduction of the feast of the Epiphany there. In that case if the Donatists did not celebrate the feast of the Nativity on December 25, Augustine would have accused them also of that failure. Since he does not, it is logical to conclude that the Donatists celebrated the feast of the Nativity on December 25. In this case, the date of the establishment of that celebration must be before the Donatist schism in 311. Actually, some authors have suggested a date as early as 300, or even earlier, for its observance, and have advanced the possibility, given the testimony of the two African sources, *De solstitiis* and Augustine, that it could have originated in North Africa rather than in Rome.⁵⁹

2. North Italy

The northern regions of Italy seem to have adopted early, around the year 383, the Roman feast of the Nativity on December 25, as is witnessed by Philastrius of Brescia, who speaks in his *Liber de haeresibus* CXL, of heretics who allowed the obligation of feasting the Nativity on December 25, but rejected the feast of the Epiphany on January 6.⁶⁰

3. Spain

Almost around the same epoch the Churches of Spain, too, observed the feast of the Nativity on December 25 and it must

58. BRUNNER, *Arnobius ein Zeuge* 178-181; PRUMM, *Zur Entstehung*, 215.

59. FENDT, *Der heutige Stand*, 1-10; SHEPHERD, *Liturgical Reform* 854; TALLEY, *Origins*, 86-87, 103. DIX, *Shape*, 357, says that "it is not probable that it is a feast of Roman origin, for it is clear that it had already been observed fairly widely in the West before this date (336), perhaps in some places before the end of the third century." This significant statement is unfortunately not documented.

60. CSEL, 38, 111; cf. MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 662.

be due to the Roman-African influence on the Churches of Italy and Spain.⁶¹ The evidence for the existence of the feast in Spain comes to us from a letter of Pope Siricius (384-399) to Himerius, bishop of Tarragona, in 385.⁶² The Pope condemns through his letter the administration of baptism there at such times as celebration of the feast of the Nativity and Epiphany. The fourth canon of the council of Saragossa of the year 380 too attests the existence of the feast of December 25 there in Spain.⁶³

4. Milan

By the end of the fourth century, the feast of the Nativity on December 25 won acceptance in Milan. It was introduced most probably by St Ambrose (d. 397) from the very beginning of his episcopate (374-397), who observed both the feasts of December 25 and January 6.⁶⁴

5. Gaul

While we do not have evidence for the celebration on December 25 in Gaul before 400, the evidence for the existence of the feast of the Epiphany on January 6 dates as far back as the year 361. According to Mohrmann, the word 'epiphany' was for the first time attributed to the feast of January 6 by a pagan Ammianus Marcellinus and it was in reference to Gaul in the year 361.⁶⁵ As there were close relations between Gaul and Eastern Christianity, it is probable, if not absolutely certain, that the feast of Epiphany on January 6 already existed in Gaul, before the feast of December 25 was introduced there by the first half of the fifth century.⁶⁶

IV. The Adoption of the Feast of the Nativity on December 25 in the East

The feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25 found acceptance in almost all the Eastern Churches one after another

61. BOTTE, *Les Origines*, 49-53; LEMARIE, *Manifestation*, 31.

62. Cf. MANSI, III, 656B

63. PL 85, 66; cf. also VACANDARD, *Les fetes*, 29.

64. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 34; FRANK, *Zur Geschichte*, 19-20; MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 666-667; TALLEY, *Origins*, 143.

65. MARCELLINUS, *Rerum Gestarum Libri qui Super sunt* XXI, 2, 4-5, referred to in MOHRMANN, *Epiphania*, 652-653; cf. also TALLEY, *Origins*, 141.

66. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 46; TALLEY, *Origins*, 142.

from the end of the fourth century, the one exception being the Armenian Church. This December 25 feast of the Nativity, being occidental in origin, was implanted in the East with difficulty. The fact that the Eastern Churches already celebrated the birth of Christ on January 6, a fact which is evident also in the nativity hymns of St Ephraem (d. 373),⁶⁷ explains the reluctance of the East in adopting the Western feast of the Nativity on December 25.

1 Antioch

The first evidence we have for the origin of the feast of the Nativity in the Antiochian Church is a sermon preached by St John Chrysostom, most probably in the year 386 on December 25, in which he attests that, "it is not yet the tenth year since this day has become clearly known to us."⁶⁸ He was trying to convince those who were reluctant to welcome the new feast that December 25 was the actual historical date of Christ's birth. The widespread and rapid acceptance of this feast on December 25 is offered by Chrysostom as clear proof for the historicity of this date, and he shows, quoting the words of Gamaliel, that it is of God and not of men: "If it be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God you cannot overthrow it, lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38-39). Again he adds as proof: "I should confidently assert of this day that the Word of God proceeds from God; on this account not only has this feast not been suppressed, but from year to year does it prosper and grow more brilliant."⁶⁹

For Chrysostom, too, this feast originated at Rome, where the records of the census of Quirinius mentioned in the second chapter of Luke's Gospel are preserved and from this source the Christian community at Rome ascertained the day of Christ's birth, the annual recurrence of which they proceeded to commemorate.⁷⁰ Although this argument of Chrysostom is sometimes seen pressed in favour of the month of December, if not for the exact date of 25,⁷¹ it seems to be nothing but natural once a movement for

67. HNat. V, 13; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 48.

68. In diem natalem Domini, PG 49, 351.

69. *Ibid.*, 352.

70. *Ibid.*, 352-353.

71. SCHODER, *Chrysostom and the Date*, 140-144.

the adoption of the feast was well under way, and all the more after the feast had actually been introduced.

Chrysostom, declaring it to be of "apostolic tradition," finds its source in the Gospels. According to him the date of the conception of Jesus is deduced from the narrative of Luke's Gospel on the conception of John the Baptist. Zechariah, who, for Chrysostom, is High Priest, made his annual entry into the Holy of Holies on the tenth day of the seventh month (ie September), the day of Atonement, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him. Elizabeth his wife conceived on September 25; October was thus the first month of her pregnancy. Consequently, it was six months later, according to the Evangelist, that Gabriel appeared to Virgin Mary. Thus she conceived in March and nine months later Jesus was born of her at Bethlehem of Judea.⁷² Even though the historical data of the Rabbinic tradition regarding the order of weekly service in the temple undertaken by the different classes of Israelite priests seem to suggest the month of December for the birth of Jesus, the day 25, however, remains totally uncertain and cannot be held historically accurate.⁷³ Besides, Zechariah was never High Priest and the liturgical function he had to fulfil in the temple according to his rank could not be that of Atonement nor could it be performed in the Holy of Holies.⁷⁴

According to Botte, the feast of the Nativity on December 25 was introduced at Antioch only in 386, the first year of Chrysostom's preaching. He bases his argument on two other sermons, preached, for Botte, before the one on December 25, 386, which we have mentioned above. The first of these two is Chrysostom's first sermon on Pentecost, in which, after enumerating three festivals as Theophany, Pascha and Pentecost, he says that the first of these is Theophany, when God appeared on the earth and lived among men.⁷⁵ This sermon leads Botte to conclude that Chrysostom considers Theophany the first feast of the liturgical year, and that it is the feast of the Nativity of Christ.⁷⁶

72. *In laudem conceptionis S. Joannis Baptistae*, PG 49, 789ff.

73. FRIEDLIEB, *Das Leben Jesu*, 312.

74. HOLZMEISTER, *Chronologia*, 38; THIBAUT, *La solennite*, 158; HOLLARD, *Les origines*, 268; STRITTMATTER, *Christmas*, 603, n. 5.

75. PG 50, 454.

76. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 22-23.

The second homily adduced by Botte is the one Chrysostom preached on December 20, 386 at a commemoration of St Philogonios, former bishop of the city of Antioch. There he describes the imminent feast of the Nativity as the festival upon which all others depend, and exhorts the faithful to celebrate this day solemnly, and to prepare themselves to receive Holy Communion worthily:

For a festival is approaching, the most solemn and awesome of all the festivals, which one would not be wrong in calling the 'metropolis' of all the festivals. Which is this? The birth of Christ in the flesh. For from this the Theophany and the holy Pascha and Ascension and Pentecost took their origin and ground. For if Christ had not been born in the flesh, He would not have been baptized, which is the Theophany.⁷⁷

According to the assertion of Usener,⁷⁸ Rietschel,⁷⁹ Botte⁸⁰ and others, this passage proves that this December 25 feast of the Nativity was not yet long established in the community of Antioch, and still needed the authority of this great preacher to confirm its hold as the feast of the Nativity of Christ. For Botte, this is clear from the fact that Chrysostom in his Pentecost sermon does not make any reference to the existence of a feast of the Nativity distinct from that of the Theophany, while in his homily on St Philogonios he does make reference to the feast of the Nativity distinct from Theophany. However, there is no evidence to prove that the sermon on Pentecost was preached prior to the sermons on St Philogonios and on the Nativity. Had it been preached later, this sermon on Pentecost would not limit the adoption of the December 25 feast of the Nativity to the year 386, in which case the expression that at Theophany God appeared on the earth and lived among men might well mean that the feast of December 25 had been celebrated at Antioch for some years.⁸¹ Besides, it is obvious from the invitation of Chrysostom for a spiritual preparation of the people that

77. *De Beato Philogonio*, PG 48, 752; ET from McARTHUR, *Christian Year*, 49.

78. USENER, *Weihnachtsfest*, 225.

79. RIETSCHER, *Weihnachten*, 52.

80. BOTTE, *Les origines*, 23-24.

81. TALLEY, *Origins* 135-136.

this feast was already known to them.⁸² Further, for Duchesne, at least, the affirmation that the 'feast is known since ten years' is a proof for its existence prior to the sermon, maybe towards the year 375.⁸³ *Apostolic Constitutions* V, 13, around the year 380, orders in Syria the celebration of the Nativity on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month, revealing a local tradition that held April as the paschal first month and thus placing the feast of the Nativity on December 25.⁸⁴ The celebration of the feast of the Nativity, therefore, possibly first originated in the region around Antioch, rather than in the city itself.⁸⁵

2. Asia Minor and Constantinople

A sermon on the Nativity of our Lord preached by St Basil (d. 379), bishop of Caesarea, throws light on the fact that the feast of the Nativity was celebrated on January 6 between the years 370 and 378 in the Churches of Cappadocia.⁸⁶ In the year 379 the Church at Constantinople invited Gregory Nazianzen, 'the theologian', one of the three Cappadocian defenders of the 'Nicene Renaissance'⁸⁷ to come to Constantinople, where he was archbishop for a short period in the year 381. He preached a sermon on December 25 in 379/380 or in 380/381, in connection with the celebration of the feast of the Nativity, which he called 'theophany.'⁸⁸ It is from this period when Gregory Nazianzen was in Constantinople (379-381) that we obtain the first evidence

82. THEODORU, *Chrysostom et la fete*. 196.

83. DUCHESNE, *Culte chretien* 272.

84. FUNK, *Didascalia* I, 269. ALTANER, *Patrologie* 256 and QUASTEN, *Patrology* II, 184 assign the collection of *Apostolic Constitutions* to around the year 380.

85. Cf. VAN DE PAVERD, *Messliturgie* 106, 156, 164, 185ff.

86. *Homilia in Christi generationem*, 2&6, PG 31, 1461A-1473A; Cf. MOSSAY, *Les fetes*, 13-14. This is corroborated by Gregory Nazianzen, who has described in a panegyric on St Basil composed shortly after 381 the ceremonies of Epiphany celebrated by St Basil in the presence of the emperor Valens at Caesarea in Cappadocia in the year 372 or 373; cf. *Oratio XLIII*, 52, PG 36, 561C-564A.

87. BACHELET, *Arianisme*, 1838-1840.

88. *In Theophania, seu Natalitia Salvatoris*, oratio XXXIII, PG 36, 312-333. MOSSAY, *Les fetes*, 21-30, has extensively discussed the terms Theophany and Epiphany and shown that the Cappadocian fathers used the term 'theophany' in this particular context to denote the feast of the Nativity on December 25.

of the celebration there of the feast of the Nativity on December 25.⁸⁹

The above evidence is confirmed by his own sermon preached less than a fortnight later, on the Epiphany, which he called 'the feast of lights', in 381, in which he refers to himself as the *exarchos*⁹⁰ of the feast, with reference to the feast of the Nativity just celebrated.⁹¹ Anyhow, it is possible that the feast of the Nativity was celebrated at Constantinople from around the year 379 when Theodosius made his accession to power, creating a new theological and political situation. It is also of considerable significance that we find these references to the feast of the Nativity in a period when there was a strong movement against Arianism – hence the importance the Orthodox attached to this Western feast.⁹² It was a time, as Adolf Adam puts it, when

the struggle against Arian heresy focused greater attention on the person, and not simply the work, of God-man, and that a feast of Christ's birth would give a suitable liturgical

89. Martin Higgins has recently questioned this evidence, basing his argument on the information given by the Byzantine historians about the history of the feast of the Purification (*Hypapante*) in Constantinople. A narrative of Theophylactus Simocatta, written early in the 7th century, says that the feast of the Purification in the year 602 fell on February 14, and not on February 2. From this Higgins concludes that the feast of the Nativity was then celebrated on January 6, and the Purification, forty days after the birth, on February 14. Consequently the feast of the Nativity on December 25 had not yet found popular favour at Constantinople even by the beginning of the 7th century; cf. HIGGINS, *Observance*, 409–410; *Note on the Purification*, 81–83. We do not know, however, anything more of such a return of the feast of the Nativity to January 6 in Constantinople.

90. Botte and others seem to suggest that Gregory meant he had founded the feast of the Nativity at Constantinople and was therefore its 'leader' (*exarchos*); BOTTE, *Les origines*, 27–28; STRITTMATTER, *Christmas*, 603. But for McArthur, that term meant nothing more than that Gregory presided over the liturgical celebration; McARTHUR, *Christian Year*, 47. Talley, however, concludes that, "if Gregory Nazianzen did not preside at the first celebration of Christmas in Constantinople in 380, that occasion was no more than the second such celebration of the feast." TALLEY, *Origins*, 138; cf. also BAUMSTARK, *Die Zeit*, 441–446.

91. *In sancta luminn oratio* XXXIX, PG 36, 336–360.

92. PRUMM, *Zur Entstehung*, 215–219; CULLMANN, *Noel*, 16–17.

expression to the profession of faith drawn up at Nicea, the Council which condemned the Arian heresy in 325.⁹³

Gregory of Nyssa, in his discourse on the baptism of our Lord, around the year 383, refers to distinct feasts of the Nativity of Christ on December 25 and the baptism of Christ on January 6:

You the initiate people are gathered together; and you bring also that people who have not made trial of them, leading, like good fathers, by careful guidance, the uninitiated to the perfect reception of the faith... these things, all that follow from them, the grace of baptism secures and conveys to us Christ, then was born as it were a few days ago— he whose generation was before all things, sensible and intellectual. Today he is baptized by John... that he might bring the Spirit from above, and exalt man to heaven⁹⁴

All these data suggest that by the year 380 the feast of the Nativity on December 25 had been introduced in Asia Minor and Constantinople.

3. Egypt

The new feast of the Nativity on December 25 did not meet with such prompt acceptance in all the regions of the East as at Antioch, Asia Minor and Constantinople. Two very important centres, Alexandria and Jerusalem, were slow to admit what was evidently felt to be an unwarranted novelty.

John Cassian gives us the first evidence for the history of the existence of the festival of the birth of Jesus in Egypt. He paid two visits to Egypt, spending a long time (ca. 380–399) in Scetis with the solitaries of the Egyptian desert. It is he who organized monasticism in Southern Gaul and he wrote between the years 418–427 the *Conferences* which give a rich if idealized picture of Egyptian monasticism towards the end of the fourth century. In the Introduction to the tenth Conference he writes of the encyclical letter annually sent on the feast of the Epiphany by the Patriarch of Alexandria:

93. ADAM, *Liturgical Year*, 124.

94. *In baptismum Christi*, PG 46, 580B 9–11 and C 1; *In diem Natalem*, PG 46, 1128–1149; cf. MOSSAY, *Les fetes*, 10–12.

In the country of Egypt this custom is by ancient tradition observed that — when Epiphany is past, which the priests of that province regard as the time, both of our Lord's baptism and also of his birth in the flesh, and so celebrate the commemoration of either mystery not separately as in the Western provinces but on the single festival of this day — letters are sent from the Bishop of Alexandria through all the churches of Egypt, by which the beginning of Lent, and the day of Easter are pointed out not only in all the cities but also in all the monasteries.⁹⁵

It is evident from this testimony of Cassian that at this time the feast of the Epiphany on January 6 had as its content both the Nativity and the baptism of Christ, thus celebrated together until the fifth century in Egypt.

Most probably the Churches of Egypt adopted the feast of December 25 of Western origin towards the year 430, in reaction to the Nestorian heresy, against which Cyril of Alexandria played a determinant role. Evidence for this date can be had from the Acts of the Council of Ephesus which transmit to us two sermons preached at Alexandria by Paul, Bishop of Emessa in the presence of Cyril of Alexandria, the first on the 29th day of Choiak (December 25), 432, and the second on the 6th of Tybi (January 1) 433. The first sermon is definitely on the birth of Christ: "Today unto us a child is born, by whom all creation visible and invisible has sure hope of salvation."⁹⁶ Therefore it seems likely that at Alexandria this Western feast was welcomed as a means of stressing the dogmatic definitions of the Council of Ephesus in 431 directed against Nestorius, which also brought about more direct relations between Rome and the Churches in the East.⁹⁷

4. Jerusalem

Jerusalem, the holy city, was the glorious theatre in which were perpetuated the great events of salvation history. It

95. *Conlatio* X, 2; CSEL XIII, 286–287; ET from NPNF (second series), XI, 401.

96. SCHWARTZ, ACO I, I, IV, 9–14; cf. also PG 77, 1432; VAILHE, *La Fete de Noel*, 213; THIBAUT, *La solennite* 158; TALLEY, *Origins*, 140–141.

97. FRANK, *Weihnachten*, 986; BOTTE, *Les origines*, 28.

remained more strongly attached to the Eastern tradition than any other Eastern Churches in commemorating every year, on January 6, the august mystery of the birth of Christ. This fidelity to the ancient tradition is witnessed by the report of the Pilgrim Nun Egeria in 384 and later in the writings of St Jerome that reveal to us the persistence of the feast of January 6 as the feast of the Nativity in Palestine. Egeria describes in her *Journal* 26:

Note that the Fortieth Day after Epiphany is observed here with special magnificence. On the day they assemble in the Anastasis. Everyone gathers, and things are done with the same solemnity as at the feast of the Easter. All the presbyters preach first, then the bishop, and they interpret the passage from the Gospel about Joseph and Mary taking the Lord to the Temple, and about Simeon and the prophetess Anna, daughter of Phanuel, seeing the Lord, and what they said to him, and about the sacrifice offered by his parents. When all the rest has been done in the proper way, they celebrate the sacrament and have their dismissal.⁹⁸

Another witness is St Jerome, the famous solitary of Bethlehem, in one of his discourses pronounced at Bethlehem at the beginning of the fifth century, most probably between the years 401–410. Here Jerome reproves the rigidity of his monks in keeping the Eastern tradition of celebrating the Nativity of Christ on January 6 and defends the legitimacy of following the Western custom of celebrating it on December 25. He tries to show that the Western tradition merits as much credence as the pretended apostolic tradition of which the Church at Jerusalem is proud:

It is indeed on this day that Christ is born. Some others think that he is born on Epiphany. Without prejudice to the opinion of others, we follow our own sentiment. Each one acts according to one's own conviction: Perhaps the Lord will deign to enlighten us about it. And those who hold the other opinion and we who say that the Saviour is born today, both honour the same Lord, the very same baby whose coming we all celebrate. However, if at all

98. WILKINSON, *Egeria's Travels*, 128.

not to convince others, it is indeed necessary to admit that several reasons are on our side. We do not speak here only in our own name, it is the opinion of the forefathers, the entire universe protests against the opinion of this province. It can be said: 'it is here Christ is born'; are not the strangers less informed than those who were from this province, the Apostles Peter and Paul and other Apostles? You have chased them away, and it is we who have welcomed them; Peter who was here with John, and with Jacob, has taught us in the West. Thus the Apostles are as much our fathers as yours.⁹⁹

This sermon makes clear that the new feast of the Nativity on December 25 was not accorded easy access into the province of Jerusalem until the first half of the fifth century.

The institution of the feast of the Nativity on December 25 as distinct from that of January 6 in Jerusalem is generally ascribed to bishop Juvenal (424-458), probably, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, between 454-456.¹⁰⁰ This is based on a sermon attributed to Basil of Seleucia (d. ca 468),¹⁰¹ preached probably between 454-456 in the presence of Juvenal,¹⁰² in which he says that Juvenal is "the one who began to celebrate the glorious, saving and adorable birth of the Saviour."¹⁰³ That the feast of the Nativity on December 25 did not exist in Jerusalem before its institution by Juvenal is based on the evidence gathered from the Armenian lectionaries of Jerusalem extant in codex *Jerusalem, arm.* 121, from between 417-439, in which the commemoration of David and St James is assigned to December 25, with the rubrical note, "in other cities the birth of Christ is

99. MORIN, *Opera*, 527; *Les monuments*, 415. ET mine

100. ERBES, *Das syrische Martyrologium*, 30, 366-367; KRETSCHMAR, *Geschichte*, 39-40; PERRONE, *Vie religieuse*, 229-230; AUBINEAU, *Les homelies festales* I, LXXV, n. 4. Van Esbroeck, even though he does not rule out the institution of the feast by Juvenal immediately after 451, says that it could have lasted only until 453 when he was deposed. And from 454 until his death in 458, he could assure himself of his victory only with the protection of the army, and in such circumstances a reintroduction of the feast seems unlikely; cf. VAN ESBROECK, *La lettre*, 369ff.

101. MARX, *Der homiletische Nachlass*, 337-340,

102. TILLEMONT, *Memoires* XV, 206; HONIGMANN, *Juvenal*, 226-227.

103. *De laudibus S. Stephani*, oratio 41, PG 85, 469B.

celebrated." Renoux, the editor of this manuscript, has conclusively shown that this rubrical note belonged to the Jerusalem ordo itself even before Juvenal introduced the December festival.¹⁰⁴ This is also corroborated by the panegyric¹⁰⁵ pronounced, according to Aubineau, most probably on December 25 in agreement with the Jerusalem ordo then in use, by Hesychius of Jerusalem (d. ca 452), who was preacher in the Holy City in the period between 412-451.¹⁰⁶

The argument that the feast of the Nativity on December 25 was introduced in Jerusalem before 439,¹⁰⁷ since Melania the Younger took part in such a celebration on December 25, in Bethlehem, a few days before her death in 439,¹⁰⁸ has also been shown to be defective. For the liturgical rites of this feast as narrated by Melania differ in more than one instance from those then in use in the Church of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹

We cannot, therefore, specify with absolute certainty when exactly the feast of the Nativity on December 25 was introduced in Jerusalem. The fact that it was no longer observed in the sixth century is testified to by Abraham of Ephesus. In his sermon on the Annunciation,¹¹⁰ preached probably before 553, he says that the Palestinians and Arabs are the only groups which do not celebrate the Nativity on December 25, but commemorate it, rather, on January 6. This is corroborated also by Abraham's contemporary Cosmas Indicopleustes, whose *Topographia Christiana* V, 10-12, written in Sinai between 547-549, declares that the Jerusalemites, unlike others, celebrate the Nativity on January 6,

104. RENOUX, *Le codex I*, 75-78, 173. The commemoration of David and St James on December 25 is attested also by the Armenian Ananias Shirak; cf. CONYBEARE, *About the Epiphany*, 321-337.

105. Sermo VIII, PG 93, 1479.

106. AUBINEAU, *Les homelies festales I*, 356-358.

107. BOTTE; *Les origines*, 19; KELLNER, *Heortologie*, 14; RAMPOLA, *Melania*, 268-270, n. 46; USENER, *Weihanchtsfest*, 331-347; VAILHE, *La fete de Noel*, 212-218.

108. *Vita Melaniae* 63, GORCE (ed.), SC 90, 254.

109. RENOUX, *Le codex I*, 172; AUBINEAU, *Les homelies festales I*, 3, n. 1.

110. *Oratio in annuntiationem Deiparae* I, JUGIE (ed.), PO XVI, 3, 443; cf. also JUGIE, *Abraham d' Ephese*, 45, 50.

and the commemoration of David and St James on December 25.¹¹¹ To support this evidence we have also a letter written by the emperor Justinian (527–565) to the Church of Jerusalem, in which he accuses the Jerusalemites of celebrating on December 25 not the feast of the Nativity, but the commemoration of David and St James, and on January 6 both Jesus' birth and baptism together, and consequently, on February 14, counting 40 days from this date instead of from December 25, the feast of the Purification (Hypapante).¹¹²

This suppression of the feast of the Nativity on December 25, though for a short period, might have taken place after the death of Juvenal in 458, because it seems possible that the conservative section of the Church of Jerusalem, which did not favour the Council of Chalcedon, wanted to do away with the new December 25 feast introduced by Juvenal, a vigorous supporter of the same Council, and return to the older date, January 6.¹¹³

Most probably it was shortly after 567/568 that the Church of Jerusalem definitively adopted the celebration of the Nativity on December 25. In the sixth century, Gregory Arzuni, an Armenian bishop, in one of his letters addressed to the Palestinians in Armenia, says in reference to the introduction of the feast of the Nativity on December 25 in Jerusalem: "After the death of Macarius, the city accepted heresy."¹¹⁴ The Macarius, referred to here is the Jerusalem Patriarch Macarias II (d. ca 567/568) who did not abide by the emperor Justinian's disciplinary decree to introduce the "heresy", that is, the celebration of the Nativity on December 25, in all the Churches of the Eastern empire. It gained the force of law in Jerusalem only during the reign of his successor, emperor Justin II (565–578), and certainly after the death of Macarius II.¹¹⁵ This is supported also by the historian Nicephorus Callistus,¹¹⁶ and by Antonius of Plaisance (ca 570) who writes in his itinerary¹¹⁷

111. Cf. SC 159, 24–25.

112. VAN ESBROECK, *La lettre*, 357; *Encore la lettre*, 442–444,

113. RENOUX, *Le codex I*, 78, n. 62; PERRONE, *Vie religieuse*, 233.

114. "*Post autem mortem Macarii, accepit civitas haeresim*", cited in VAN ESBROECK, *La lettre*, 364.

115. *Ibid.*, 364–371; cf. also CCO, *Fonti*, serie II, fascicolo XXVIII, Siri IV, 85.

116. *Historia ecclesiastica* XVII, 28, PG 147, 292 A–B.

117. GEYER (ed.), *Itinerarium* XXX, CCL 175, 144.

that he had witnessed in Jerusalem the commemoration of David and St James on the morrow of the feast of the Nativity of Christ on December 25, as well as the administration of baptism in the Jordan on January 6. Since the Nativity was the only theme the older festival of January 6 at Jerusalem, without any reference to the baptism,¹¹⁸ this division of the themes points to the final adoption of the feast of the Nativity on December 25 in Jerusalem by that time.

5. The East Syrian Church

It is probably by the beginning of the fifth century that the East Syrian Church began to celebrate the feast of the Nativity on December 25. We have the first evidence of it in Canon XIII of the Synod of Mar Isaac in the year 410. There we read:

....We will uniformly celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of our Saviour and the great day of his Resurrection. as the metropolitan archbishop, Catholicos of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, has indicated to us. He who dares to celebrate in his church or among his people the feast of the Nativity, the Lent and the great day of the Unleavened bread, alone and in disagreement with the Church of the West and of the East, has to be denied without mercy of all ecclesiastical ministry as a corrupted person, and there will be no remedy for him.¹¹⁹

6. The Church of Armenia

The Armenian Orthodox Church is the only Eastern Church that has remained faithful to the ancient tradition, handed down by the Father, of keeping the feast of the Nativity of Christ on January 6. According to the canon, (*ARM.*) 12,¹²⁰ of the Armenian Council of Sis of the year 1342, it is around the middle of the fourteenth century that the Armenian Catholics introduced into their liturgical calendar the feast of the Nativity on December 25. The Armenian Orthodox Church not in communion with Rome has even today the feast of the Nativity of Christ on January 6, for which they are accused of being "of hard head and rigid neck".¹²¹

118. WILKINSON, *Egeria's Travels*, 80 n. 2; BOTTE *Les origines*, 16; TALLEY, *Origins*, 138.

119. CHABOT, *Synodicon*, 27 (French trans). 267.

120. MANSI XXV, 1254; cf. also CCO, Fonti, Serie I, fascicolo VII (Studi Storici), 187.

121. ASSEMANI, BO II; 164; cf. also CULLMANN, *Noel*, 31.

CHAPTER TWO

A TRANSLATION OF THE PROPERS OF THE OFFICE FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

The Propers of the Office and Mass for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord in the Chaldean and Malabar Tradition are found in the Chaldean Breviary edited by Bedjan,¹ as well as in the Breviary of the Church of the East (Nestorians) edited by Darmo (d. 1969),² Metropolitan of the Church of the East in Trichur, India.

In this chapter we give a complete translation from the Syriac of the propers of the Office for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord. Though this is mainly a translation of propers only, and the references to prayers of the ordinary are given as found in the text of the propers, we give in square brackets a translation also of some important prayers from the ordinary. Words in parentheses, not found in the Syriac text, are inserted to make the sense clear. The pages in the Breviary of Bedjan are numbered either in Syriac or in Arabic numerals with an asterisk. In our translation the Arabic numerals without asterisk substitute for the Syriac numerals, and the page numbers of the text of the propers are given in brackets thus: (320). Further, each unit of the propers is numbered in order to facilitate comparison with the corresponding texts in manuscripts.

The scriptural passage, mainly the psalms, are translated from the *Pesit̃ta*.³ Since the psalms in the original text are

1. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 320-353.

2. DARMO, *Breviarium I*, 545-584.

numbered according to the *Pesit̃ta*, which differs from the numbering of both LXX (Vulgate) and Hebrew, we give here a concordance of these numerations of the psalms:⁴

<i>Pesit̃ta</i>	<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Vulgate</i>
1-8	1-8	1-8
9	9	(9 : 1-21
10	10	(9 : 22-36
11	11	10
12-113	12-113	11-112
(114 : 1-8	114	(113 : 1-8
(114 : 9-26	115	(113 : 9-26
(115 : 1-9	(116 : 1-9	114
(115 : 10-19	(116 : 10-19	115
116	117	116
117-145	118-146	117-145
146	147 : 1-11	146
147	147 : 12-20	147
148-150	148-150	148-150

Rubrics, titles, etc., printed in red in the original text, are given in italics in the translation.

- 1 (320) *The Order (Taksā) and the Rules (Qānōnē) to be used on the Holy Feast of the Nativity of our Lord⁵ which is celebrated every year on December 25 irrespective of the day, and one ought to know that if the feast falls on a Sunday, the order of the feast alone is made use of.*
- 2 *Marmitā*: "His foundations on his mountain" (Pss 87-88), see 281*.
- 3 *A(i)k 'Etrā* : five times: with these beginnings: "How lovely are your tabernacles (masknā), O Lord of hosts* My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord* my heart

3. The first version of the Old Testament was edited by S. Lee in London, 1823, for the Bible Society; that of the New Testament was edited by J. A. Wilmanstad in Vienna, 1555. Now there exist several editions of the *Pesitta*. The one printed by the Dominicans in Mosul (Old Testament 2 vol., 1887, 1888; New Testament 1 vol., 1891) is used here; cf. WRIGHT, *Syriac Literature*, 6-7; MOOLAN, *Annunciation* 228, n. 51.

4. Cf. also VOSTE, *Sur les titres*, 232, n. 2; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 447; VELLIAN, *Evening Services*, 6; PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*, 12, n. 29; YOUSIF, *Bibliographia* 5; MOOLAN, *Annunciation*, 64-65.

5. Darmo and all manuscripts studied add 'in flesh' (babsar).

and my flesh praise the living God * [My King and my God, blessed are they who dwell in your house"]⁶ (Ps 84:1-2, 4)

- 4 *Sabbah*: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
- 5 *Laku Mārā*: five times : with these beginnings : "I rejoiced when they said to me * we are going to the house of the Lord" (Ps 121:1).
- 6 *Sabbah*: Glory be to the Father...
- 7 'Alam: From everlasting to everlasting.
- 8 *Slōṭā* : O glorious Child, who was born and has redeemed our race from the servitude of death, and enlightened our hearts with glorious light of your knowledge and taught us to know about the greatness of your birth and made us worthy that we may, with the Magi and the shepherds who came to adore you, celebrate with songs of praises the feast of your birth (321) and (who) made clear to us that we know you and may believe in you that you are omnipotent and the doer of everything with the prompting of your will. We beseech and ask and pray you to receive from us prayers which are sent up before the throne of your majesty and make us worthy to stand before you with a pure heart to celebrate and solemnize the feasts of your dispensation (mdabbrānūṭā), [Lord of everything, for ever].
- 9 'Onitā d-Qdam: and begins (with the melody) brita hadta (the new Creation): "Come let us praise the Lord" (Ps 95:1); "We will praise and be glad all the days" (Ps 90:14); "The people to be creatēd, let them praise the Lord" (Ps 102: 18). d-Surtā (of the Scripture) *Because a child is born to us and a Son is given to us*" (Is 9:6). Let us all praise the wonderful child who is born to us, because in him the true light has appeared to those who were sitting in darkness. Therefore with the celestial assemblies let us cry out and say: "Glory to

6. [] Darmo omits.

God in the heights and peace and tranquillity on earth and good hope for men" (Lk 2:14), for at the end of the last times he has appeared in flesh from our race and taught us that we recognize him alone as the Maker (aboda) of all things; *Repeat.*

10 *Sabbah*: Glory be to the Father ...

Let us all praise the wonderful child (see above).

11 *Māryā Qrētāk*: with these *qānōnē* (refrains):

"Lord, I have called upon you, you answer me"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

[Lord, I have called upon you, you answer me]

"listen to my words and accept" (Ps 140:1).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"My prayer as incense before you"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"the offering of my hands like an evening sacrifice"
(140:2)

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"Set a guard, O Lord, on my mouth and a guard on my lips" (v. 3).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"that my heart may not deviate to evil word"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"and so I may commit deeds of iniquity;"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"I shall not frequent wicked men" (v. 4).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"Let the just man teach me and reprove me"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"let not the oil of the wicked anoint my head"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"because my prayer is against their wickedness" (v. 5).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"And their judges were cast down by a strong hand"

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

"and they heard my pleasant words" (v. 6).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“Like the ploughshare that scatters the earth”

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“their bones were scattered upon the mouth of Sheol”.
(v. 7).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“But I, towards you, O Lord, I have raised my eyes”

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“and in you have I put my trust, do not reject my soul” (v. 8).

(322)

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“Keep me from the hand of the boasters”

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“who set snares for me” (v. 9).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“Let the wicked fall together in their nets”

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

“while I pass safe” (v. 10).

Glory to you, glorified is your birth.

12

“With my voice I invoked the Lord, with my voice I begged the Lord” (Ps 141:1).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“And I have raised my petitions before him”

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“and my distress I have made manifest before him”
(v. 2).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“When my spirit is harassed, you, you know my paths”

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“in the way of my steps, they have laid snares for me” (v. 3).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“I looked to right and watched and there was no one to instruct me”

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“I was deprived of a place of refuge and there was no avenger for my soul” (v. 4).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“And I called out to you, Lord, and I said”

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“that you are my hope and my portion in the land of the living” (v. 5).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“Listen to my supplication, because I have been brought very low”

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I” (v. 6).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“Set my soul free from prison, that I may thank your name”

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

“Your righteous shall wait for me until you shall reward me” (v. 7).

Glorified are you and glorified is your birth.

13

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my ways” (Ps 118:105).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“I have sworn and resolved to observe the rules of your righteousness” (v. 106).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“I have been greatly afflicted, Lord, give me life according to your word” (v. 107).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“Delight, O Lord, in the words of my mouth and teach me by your laws” (v. 108).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“My soul is always in your hands and I have not disregarded your ordinance” (v. 109).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“The sinners have concealed snares for me, but I have not gone astray from your commandments” (v. 110).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“I have inherited your testimony forever, because it is the joy of my heart” (v. 111).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

“I have brought back my heart, so that I may observe your statutes steadfastly forever” (v. 112).

Glorified is your birth which gladdens all.

14 “Praise the Lord, all you peoples”

Let the people and (all) peoples glorify him.

(323) “glorify him all you nations” (Ps 116:1).

Let the people and (all) peoples glorify him.

“Because his kindness has prevailed over us;”

Let the people and (all) peoples glorify him.

“steadfast is the Lord forever” (v. 2).

Let the people and (all) peoples glorify him.

15 And they praise (Glory be to the Father...).

Glory to your name, Lord of all.

16 And they say ‘alam (From everlasting to everlasting).

By all mouths you be praised.

And they return (to the beginning): “Lord, I have called upon you, you answer me; listen to my words and accept my prayer” (Ps 140: 1 ,2).

And they respond: Let us pray, Peace be with us.

17 *Slōṭā*: Glory to you, the Most High, who came down and took our humble body, and made it one with him in the hypostasis (qnoma) of his divinity, and promised that he will make all of us heirs of his glory and of the same image (dmuṭa) of his greatness, Lord of all [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever. Amen].

18 ‘*Oniṭā* d-*Bāṭar*: with the composition: Mamoditak Māran (To your baptism, our Lord).

“Because he has wrought wonder” (Ps 98:1); “Before the Lord has this been done and it is a wonder in our eyes” (Ps 117:23); d-*Surṭā* (of the Scripture): “For a sign and a wonder in Israel” (Is 8:18). A great wonder befitting God has been wrought today among our earthly race, for He who is the image (dmūṭā) of God took, in His love, the form (dmūṭā) of a servant from the holy virgin so that He might raise up him who was created in His glorious image (ṣalma) because he had fallen from his glory. Let us praise, saying: “Blessed is the

fruit of your womb, O Mother of God,⁷ the Saviour of all the universe; *Repeat*.

19 *Sabbah*: Glory be to the Father ...

A great wonder befitting God ... (see above).

20 *Kārōzūta*: Father of mercies ... see 341* [Let us all stand up in order, in joy and cheerfulness, and let us beseech and say, O our Lord, have mercy on us. *And the people respond* (at every pause): Our Lord, have mercy on us. And (it) continues: Father of mercies and God of all consolation, we beseech you... Our Saviour and the procurer of our salvation and the provider of all things, we beseech you ... For the peace and stability of the whole world and of all the churches, we beseech ... For our country and for all countries and for all who live there in faith, we beseech ... For a moderate climate and the fertility of the year and the produce of fruits and the prosperity of all the world, we beseech ... For the health of our holy fathers (NN)⁸ and for all their ministers, we beseech ... For the kings who hold power in this world, we beseech ... O merciful God who governs everything in mercy, we beseech ... For the priests and servers holding the right faith and for all our brotherhood in Christ, we beseech ... O you who are rich in mercies and overflowing with compassion, we beseech ... O you who exist before all ages and whose power abides forever, we beseech ... O you who are by nature good and the giver of all good things, we beseech ... O you who wish not the death of a sinner but rather that he repent of his wickedness and live, we beseech ... O you who are glorified in heaven and adored on earth, we beseech ... O you who by your birth (or *Epiphany* or *Fast* or *Entrance* or *Resurrection* or (*Ascension* or *Descent* or *holy Cross*) made the earth rejoice and gladdened the heaven, we beseech ... O you who are by nature immortal and dwell in the joyous light, we beseech ... The Saviour of all men and especially

7. Darmo and all Mss studied except Ms V: 'Mother of Christ'.

8. Here the names of the Pope, Patriarch. Metropolitan and the bishop of the place are mentioned.

of those who believe in you, we beseech ... Save us all, O Christ our Lord, through your grace and increase in us your tranquillity and your peace, and have mercy on us].⁹

- 21 *Qanddisā Allāhā*: with the solemn melody of the feast (see 9). [Holy God, holy Mighty, holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *Sabbah*. Holy God... 'Alam. Holy God... *And they say*: Let us pray, peace be with us. *Slotā*: To you, O Holy One, who are by nature holy, and glorified in your substance (iṭuṭa), and high and exalted above all in your divinity (allāhūtā); holy and blessed nature (kyānā) forever, we acknowledge, we adore and we praise (you) at all times, Lord of all, Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, Amen. *And the deacon who announces, says*: Bless, O my Lord. Bow your heads for the laying on of hands and receive the blessing. *Then the president says*: May Christ extol your service in the heavenly kingdom.]
- 22 *Suyākē*: "Blessed be the man who is in the path...", see 216* (Pss 1-4).
- 23 "Listen my words...", see 218* (Pss 5-7).
- 24 *Slotā*: To your dispensation..., see 12. [To your wonderful and ineffable dispensation, O my Lord, which in mercy and compassion was worked out and perfected and completed for the renewal and redemption of our weak nature through the firstborn who (is) from us, we render glory and honour, thanksgiving and adoration at all times. Lord of all, Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever, Amen.]
- 25 *Surrāyā*: "His foundations..." : *the whole* (psalm): with the (melody): Awdāw 1-Māryā d-Tāw (They will thank the Lord who is good). see 281*, (Ps 87)
- 26 *Slotā d-Bāsāliqē*: May your divinity, O my Lord, be pleased with our service, and may the supplication of our weakness come before you, and may your mercies be good advocates for our wickedness. May our prayers be accepted before you; from the treasure-house of your

9. ET adapted from PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*, 34-35.

compassion, may the petitions of our needs be answered at all times and moments, Lord of all [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen.]

27a And they begin *'oniātā d-Bāsāliqē*: with the (melody): Nawsā d-Rūḥadqudsā (Temple of the Holy Spirit).

(324) *"His foundations / upon his holy mountain"* (Ps 87:1); *"In the town of the Lord of hosts"* (Ps 48:8); d-Surtā (of the Scripture): da Lbāktā (of the lesson): *"For behold, I announce to you great joy which will be for all the people: for to you is born today the Saviour, who is the Lord Christ, in the city of David"* (Lk 2:10-11). Christ is born in Bethlehem, and from the East have come the Magi to honour him, asking and saying, where is the King born?; we have come to him indeed to bow before him and to adore him; *Repeat.*

28a *"Here is raised up a horn for David"* (Ps 131:17); d-Surtā, *"Regarding His son who is born in flesh from the seed of the house of David"* (Rom 1:3; cf. also Lk 2:4; Jn 7:42; Rev 22:16). In flesh was born from the house of David Christ, who gives us life, whose birth has gladdened all. He is the Lord of glory from his Father, and in the body is of our humanity, Jesus, the seed of Abraham (cf. Gal 3:16).

29 *"Who humbles the spirit (pride) of princes"* (Ps 76:12); d-Surtā: *"When Herod the king heard this he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him"* (Mt 2:3). The Child from Mary disquieted Herod, and the weeping of Rachel came to an end. In Ramah the slaughter and bloodshed of infants (Jer 31:15; Mt 2:18), and today with us the Saviour of all creatures.

30 *"And He chose David, His servant"* (Ps 78:69); d-Surtā: *Who from the olden times promised through his prophets in the holy books"* (Rom 1:2). From the seed of David the just king: Mary has brought forth for us the child of wonder, and he has shaken through his birth the alien king, and has given joy to the Magi, and has gladdened them through his birth.

31 *A king who grew mighty above all gods"* (Ps 95:3); d-Surtā: *"And for his Kingdom there will be no end"*

(Lk 1:33). A king who does not pass away and whose crown is indissoluble: Jesus son of David is manifested in the manger; the Magi from Persia came to adore him; blessed be the One who exalted our race through the first fruit who (is) from us.

32 *“From those who walk in simplicity”* (Ps 84:11); d-Surtā: *“For a sign and a wonder in Israel”* (Is 8:18). Christ is born of the virgin Mary, and he is from the seed of David and Abraham. The power of his lordship is put upon his shoulder (Is 8:6), and his authority will reign both in heaven and on earth.

33 *“Praise him and sing to him”* (Ps 105:2) d-Surtā: *“And the angels served him”* (Mt 4:11; cf. Mk 1:13). The angels and their ranks longed for glory in heaven and peace on earth; let the race of mortals rejoice and praise in the birth of Christ who saved our nature.

34 *“Henceforth praise his people, O (you) peoples”* (Deut 32:43); d-Surtā:

(325) *“I will thank you among the peoples, and to your name / I will sing (praises) among the nations”* (Ps 57:9; 108:3). Peoples and nations, come, let us sing praises to Christ, who has saved our nature and converted our obstinacy to the light of his knowledge, and has given us through his goodness, eternal life.

35 *“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice* (Ps 96:11). O our Saviour, the angels rejoice in your birth, and men on earth sing glory. The Magi brought gold, myrrh and incense and entered the grotto and offered and adored you.

36 *“He will be like a tree planted beside the stream of waters”* (Ps 1:3; cf. Jer 17:8). The fruit of joy appeared to us from Mary, and it remitted our sins and cancelled our crimes, and went out in search of us and restored our mortality to life, and renewed our nature worn out from sin.

37 *“The joy in all the earth”* (Ps 48:2). In the birth of Christ the angels announced glory in heaven and peace on earth. Draw nigh and bring, O mortals, the abolition

of your sins, because the fruit which is from Mary justifies the sinners.

38a “*Break forth into song, and sing and praise*” (Ps 98:4). Leap for joy, O peoples, and rejoice in the birth of Christ that he, in his mercy, makes us worthy of the glory of his kingdom and let us together make glory ascend when saying “Blessed be the day of your birth.”

39b d- *Slotā*: *The Lord is faithful in his words*” (Ps 145:13). Our Lord who in his mercies promised your servants: ‘All who ask will receive, and who seek will find’ (Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9). From you we beseech power and help. so that we may accomplish in our deeds the will of your lordship.

40 “*O our God, have mercy on us*” (Ps 67:1). O Compassionate, have pity on us and have mercy on us and do not neglect us in times of affliction, because in you is our hope night and day, and those who rely upon you are not disappointed.

41 *And they praise* [= say the doxology] with the first (‘onitā).

42 *Know that if Ramsa of Nativity or of Manifestation (Denhā) fallson a Sunday, they celebrate the Mass (Rāzē first, and when they come to and say Had Abā Qanddisā (One, the Father, Holy), (they do not say) the ‘unnāyā (refrain), but draw the veils of the sanctuary: and they begin Abūn d-ba-smayā (Our Father Who (art) in heaven) (with) solemn (tone of the feasts) and they recite the Slotā (Prayer) of Ramsā; and when they come to the surrāyā d-Bāsāliqē, they remove the veil and when the surrāyā is finished they say the ‘oniātā d-Bāsāliqe: and they praise [= say the doxology] with the first (b-Qadmāyā), and they enter the sanctuary, and the deacon says: “Praise the living God.”*

43 d-*Bēm*: Rejoice, O peoples, before our Saviour who gladdened all through his birth;

(326) *Repeat.*

44a *Bāṭē* (Stanzas): That splendour of justice glittered through him from the house of David. Draw near, O peoples, and invoke his name, because “the Lord declared us

righteous," as is written (Is 57:12): the virgin has truly conceived and brought forth according to the words of prophets (Is 7:14). Cry out, O brothers, glory to Emmanuel for his mysteries (Rāzē).

44b The hero of worlds came to him; Isaiah called him 'wonder' (Is 9:6), whose aspect is of men and whose wonders are of God.

45 *Tesbohtā*: The mysteries which we have received *and if Sunday*, Jesus our Lord; (see) 346*

46 *And the deacon proclaims kollan hākēl (we all therefore) and the priest prays Tesbohtā Mār (Glory, my Lord) and they say Abūn d-ba-smayā (Our father who (art) in heaven) and they praise [= say the doxology] as above with solemn melody, and they exchange peace in the nave and they pray as usual, and the priest seals (the prayer) in the sanctuary: Māran 'Iso Msihā (our Lord Jesus Christ) and the rest.*

47a *In Lelyā (nocturns) however they recite from Allāhā Qām (God arose): four hullale with their gigyōrē (farcings, literally 'strangers'):*

(Hullālā	12: Pss	82-88
,,	13: Pss	89-92
,,	14: Pss	93-101
,,	15: Pss	102-105; see 278*)

48 *MAWTBA*: with (the melody) Res haylwātā (The chief of hosts). "God sent his goodness and his truth" (Ps 57:3); "Who sent from heaven and saved me" (Ps 57:3). The chief of the heavenly angels (literally 'vigilers') was sent from heaven to the blessed among women, the holy virgin, and while he was in fear without ceasing, he announced to her saying: * "Blessed are you, woman, bearer of salvation; blessed are you, Mother of the hero and saviour; blessed are you, because from you shone forth the King of kings who is for ever; blessed are you who became the abode for the Lord of worlds." * "Blessed are you who carry in your womb the sun that makes all creatures happy; blessed are you who are counted worthy to be celebrated by the assemblies

arrayed in light; blessed are you who brought forth the Lord of all who saved us from death.”* “Blessed are you who brought forth the forgiver (mḥassyānā) and remits debts; blessed are you from whom shone forth the One who gladdens the creatures; blessed are you, the ship (elpā) carrying the heavenly riches with which the celestial and earthly ones enrich themselves; blessed are you from whom gushed forth the spring of helps, that makes the world drink and satiates those who are in need, halleluia; *Repeat.*

49

327 “*And he flew upon the wings of the wind*” (Ps 18:10). The man of fire flew and descended from between the arrays / of flame; while being clothed with the burning flame, he broke through the heights and came down to the bottom, and he was carrying with his greetings a message *The messenger descended from among the arrays of flame and arrived; he stopped between the Father and creation. He saw the virgin who was agreeable and adorned with chastity. He made three seals upon the door of her temple * And through the greeting he gave her, the Holy Spirit brooded over her shrine, the sealed and imprinted palace, and in it dwelt the Son of the King. And the seal of her virginity witnesses that her pregnancy and giving birth are admired by all* The Sign who fashions all infants, and who can create anything from nothing, fashioned him; and blessed are you, Mary, because from you shone forth the new sun, and the power of its light renders darker the sun in the firmament, halleluia.

50

“*I will say: Peace be with you*” (Ps. 121:8) Peace to you, daughter of David, because the angel came down to greet you, and brought you the message from the mouth of the Most High; Peace to you, full of grace, since the Lord our Lord is with you* Peace to you, Mother of the Babe who does not grow old; Peace to you, Mother of the Saviour of (all) creatures; Peace to you, who the Cherubim invited and were honoured by the Magi; Peace to you, who made the Seraphim rejoice and were adored by the shepherds * Peace to you, the speedy

ship, the giver of life to mortals; Peace to your womb which carried the Saviour of all the worlds; The tidings of the shepherds proclaimed peace and tranquillity on earth* Peace to the fleece that Gideon prepared (Judg 6:37–39); Peace to you from whom our Saviour sucked milk; He who gives life is born in Bethlehem; The star on high shines for us because of his birth, halleluia.

- 51 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): chief melody: “*Who is able to utter the marvels of the Lord*” (Ps 106:2). Who is able to narrate your wisdom, you the great treasure that enriches the needy? Because you have shown your strength in parts and figures to the physicians, whom your will established to heal the sick. You manifested yourself to Moses in the bush (Exod 3:2), and Elijah saw in the clouds your chariot (2 Kings 2:11), and Jonah ministered in abyss to the mystery of your burial (Jon 1:17) * Isaiah saw in the holy temple the Seraphim glorify you (saying): “holy, holy, you are holy, the veiled and invisible nature (*kyānā*) which fills the earth with your glory, and the heaven is covered with your brightness” (Is 6:1–3); Ezekiel saw you, on the throne, surrounded by flame (Ezek 1:26–28); Daniel saw you
(328) who come above the clouds to judge all (Dan 7:13); David called you the spring in which are purified the sons of Adam (Ps 85:11); John called you lamb, because it is you who take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29); Malachhi named you sun (Mal 4:2), the rays of which enlightened the creatures* Zechariah predicted the mystery of your resurrection (Zech 6:11–13), because you are the light and you are the splendour, and to you we implore in love and say: “Christ, Babe of wonder (Is 9:6), have mercy on us.”

- 52 “*Come, see the deeds of God*” (Ps 46:8). A great miracle has happened in the birth of Jesus, our King, who came for our salvation. When he appeared in the grotto, he inspired all creatures with awe, so that all of them come to honour him, because he is their saviour. The heaven and the earth and all that is in them were quickly moved to show the honour that was due, each one of them in his being (*qnōmā*) while adoring before

him* From the wind the angels from on high praised him with their jubilations; from the East the Magi of Persia carried their gifts and brought to him gold, myrrh and incense, and offered (them) to him as for a king; from the North the shepherds praised him with their jubilations; from the West the sons of promise proclaimed his coming through their prophecy; from the South hurried Egypt and received him with his mother; the earth gave him a cave; the desert bestowed on him a manger; the prophets rejoice, because he is come; the apostles rejoice, because they have seen him; the (Jewish) people weep, because it was driven away by him; the peoples (gentiles) rejoice, because by him they were gathered; and now on the day of his birth the Church and her children cry out praise and say* "Glory to God in the heights, and peace and tranquillity on earth and good hope to men" (Lk 2:14). Christ, O Babe of Wonder, have mercy on us.

- 53 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): with (the melody): nbiyye d-qustā (prophets of truth). "*Come, see the deeds of God*" (Ps 46:8). I saw a great wonder wrought in Bethlehem on the day of the birth of Jesus our King: the angels came down and announced to the shepherds the new message full of wonder, and they hurried up and came to the door of the grotto carrying their gifts* And they entered and saw the Newborn, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger; the star on high called Persia to adore the King, who is born in Judea according to the expectation* Glory to God in the heights, and to the Son who is from His bosom, and to the Holy Spirit / from everlasting; to Him, praise!
- (329)

- 54 "*Joy in all the earth*" (Ps 48: 2). On this day there has been a great uproar in Bethlehem on the day of the birth of Jesus our King: the angels came down and they shouted there tremendous songs full of wonder, and the shepherds praised the Son with their Jubilations, while standing in awe* And the Magi came from the East, carrying their gifts to the door of the grotto and entered and adored and offered him myrrh, incense and good gold* Gold as for his kingship, and incense

as for his divinity, and myrrh which will be useful for his burial; to Him, praise !

55 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): with (the melody): sāhde brīke (the blessed martyrs). “*Bless the Lord, O you, His angels*” (Ps 103:20). The assemblies of angels announced at your birth peace to the earthly beings, and with joy they shouted praise to your Father, who sent His Son, Saviour, and converted the peoples from error to the truth of His faith, so that His honourable image (salma) may not perish.

56 “*They shall praise your name*” (Ps 66:4). “Praise to the Creator, and hope to the mortals,” proclaimed the spiritual ones; henceforth, there is reconciliation, and the occasion for sin ceases; and the course of prophecy comes to rest at the harbour of Emmanuel, which is interpreted “with us our God.”

57 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): res rukkābā (chief composition). *He who is before the worlds*” (Ps 55:19). The great mystery, which was hidden from the generations and tribes, is being revealed to us at the end of the centuries. The only One who is in the bosom of his Father came and received the form (dmūtā) of a servant in his bounty. And he narrated and revealed to us the full faith about the Trinity.

58 *His lightnings illumine the worlds*” (Ps 97:4). The light that shined in Judea has made the world rejoice in its splendour, and has stirred the Magi up to come to his honour; and they brought to him their gifts, gold and myrrh and incense: gold as for King, and incense as for God, and myrrh which reveals his passion and his death for our salvation. Praise to your great compassion, that you humiliated yourself and saved our race from error.

59 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): with (the melody): hāw barōyā (That Creator). “*His glorious name is blessed for ever*” (Ps 72:19). Blessed is he who sent the Magi to adore the Son Christ, the life of the worlds, and brought back those who were in error to adore His name. But that

(330) enemy of our nature, equipped with envy against the just ones, / brought about the murder of the children in Bethlehem. They became martyrs [victims], reconciling the Lord of all. What was written came to fulfilment at that time: "Rachel weeps for her sons and refuses to be consoled, because they are no more" (Jer 31:15). And may we earthly ones cry out to him and together say: "O the One who gladdened us on the day of your birth, Lord of all, praise to you!"

60 "*His lightnings illumine the worlds*" (Ps 97:4). The glorious splendour from the Father, who, while in our flesh, appeared and shone forth for our salvation, brought back our mortal race that was destroyed, and liberated it from error; and his glorious and spiritual birth was known to the sons of Persia in great wonder, by means of the star; and with gifts they came to Judea to see his glory; and the heavenly assemblies shouted with songs of praise: "Today is born for you the Saviour, who is the Lord Christ, in the city of David" (Lk 2:11). Come all of us, let us thank him and adore him and say: "Holy, holy, holy are you, Lord of all, praise to you!"

61 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): chief melody. "*May our God have mercy on us*" (Ps 67:1). O God, in the love you possess, you bent down to the earthly people as the lover of men, who knows needs before they are asked. In his knowledge he anticipates all our actions. He is the One who changes the moments and times, and from everlasting he never refuses earthly people anything from the goods of his gifts. My Lord, you look upon sinners and see them, and ignore our mistakes in your goodness, because you are God and by your mercy you stooped down among earthly people as the Lover of men, Lord of all, praise to you!

62 "*And I was speaking peace*" (Ps 119:7). "Greet Jerusalem and show this to the high priests," said Persia to the Magi, "Go, honour with gold the King, who has appeared in Judea; with myrrh announce his passion for our sake, and with incense indicate his (divine)

being (itutā), for he is equal to the Father in authority, and he is the Lord God. Draw nigh, kingdom of Nimrod which exalted us (Gen 10:9); for behold! all peoples are submitted to its lordship. The star is before you, go, fall down, and adore him and say to him: 'You are our King and deserve acknowledgement', Lord of all, praise to you!

- 36 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): with (the melody): *tāw baytāye* (come friendly). "*The heavens will rejoice and the earth will exult*" (Ps 96:11). On the day of your birth, Our Saviour, the spiritual and earthly ones rejoiced, because they have seen a wonder wrought in the grotto in
(331) Bethlehem. The virgin, daughter of David / conceived and gave birth without man. Magi from Persia have carried and brought gifts for him. Also the shepherds offered him worship, while they shouted with their songs: "Be glorified your birth, O King, who appeared from David, because in him the assemblies above were reconciled in one accord with those below. And in him is great hope and salvation for all peoples". To you glory, O King Christ, have mercy on us.

- 64 "*Before the Lord this was, and it is a wonder in our eyes*" (Ps 117:23). Lord, when your holy birth was announced among the creatures, one spiritual being was sent as a messenger full of wonder; and on the day of your birth many cried out: "Glory to God in the heights, peace on earth and good hope to mortals, because today is born in Bethlehem the Redeemer of creatures". And at once all the shepherds left their flock and came to adore your majesty. They were not the only ones, indeed, who were impelled to offer glory, but also the Magi from the East carried and brought offerings to the door of your lordship. Since great and glorious is the day of your birth, Lord of all, praise to you!

- 65 *Rukkābā* (composition): with (the melody): 'eu lāk 'ubbā (how good of you, O Womb!) "*Lord, show me your ways*" (Ps 25:4). The way of the Lord had been announced in all ages, for the just prophets walked in it, and it appeared to them as if in mystery in a

wonderful way. Among the Babylonians, two true heralds had seen its image (tupsā) * Ezekiel saw Him sitting in a chariot of Cherubim, an image of the glory of the blessed One (Ezek 1:26–29). And he had announced the mystery of the resurrection (Ezek 34:20–24) * and the people of Israel who had been immersed in the despair of mortality and decomposition suddenly woke up * And “like the ancient of days, sitting on a glorious throne,” Daniel said, “I saw him, and spiritual beings were serving him * Thousands upon thousands and myriads of myriads were singing glory to his name, saying ‘Lord, you are holy, you are holy, you are holy’. And as the Son of Man [literally, Son of men], whose power rules over everything, I saw the Son in the image (šalmā) of our body, and his kingdom has no end for generations” (cf. Dan 7:9ff.). And behold! everything has reached accomplishment by his coming to our race; to Him, praise!

66

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“Because with you is the fountain of life” (Ps 36:9). How good of you, O (Mary), joyful Womb, to have provided all the happiness to the race of mortals, because for us the King Christ has appeared from you through a wonder, / when the archangel announced to you the message full of peace * Peace be with you, blessed among women, for in you are blessed Eve and her children accursed from the ages * O Mary, blessed Mother, whose name has been proclaimed in the prophecy, you, therefore, have been exalted by your son * The just prophets, during their generations, waited upon this hope, and in parables of their mysteries they called him by miraculous names * David called him ‘Wonder’ (Ps 17:7); son of Amoz called him ‘Wonder’, ‘Counsellor’, ‘Hero’ and ‘Saviour’ of the peoples (Is 9:6). Exalted is your annunciation, glorified your conception, and your birth marvelled at; the fruit that appeared from you is exalted, because he has reconciled with us the heavenly and the earthly (being) who were at enmity, and he reconciled with us the Father who sent him to our humanity; to Him praise!

67

Rukkābā (composition): with (the melody): *zaynā d-Ruhā* (weapon of the Spirit). “*The light dawned through*

darkness for the just” (Ps 112:4). You are the light, life and the truth (Jn 14:6), O Christ, our Life-Giver. By the Holy Spirit the prophets prophesied and announced you in their revelations * Moses called you the great prophet in Israel (Deut 18:15, 19); Isaiah called you ‘Wonder’ (Is 9:6); and David (called you) Babe of ‘Wonder’ (Ps 17:7). * Micah named you the ‘Ruler’ who reigns over everything (Mic 5:2); Zechariah announced the mystery of your entrance (Zech 9:9); Malachi named you ‘Sun’ (Mal 4:2) * Jonah depicted the mystery of your death and resurrection (Jon 1:17; 2:10); Daniel prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed at your murder (Dan 9:24ff; 11:31; 12:11) * O Christ! about whom the prophets proclaimed in fear, have mercy on your Church, and protect her children and have mercy on them.

68. “*Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice*” (Ps 105:3)

All the holy prophets have foretold and announced your birth, O Jesus, Christ our King, who came in your love and liberated our race from darkness. Daniel saw you “like the ancient of days, sitting on a glorious throne,” in your excellent and splendid appearance (Dan 7:9ff). Ezechiel also saw the chariot of your great glory (Ezech 1:26), while the spiritual beings praise you with hymns of glory, O Eternal Being who is from everlasting: Spare us (who are) alive, and purge our guilts and have mercy on us.

69 *Suhlāpā* (variation): with (the melody): Sbarteh d-Mārān (good tidings of our Lord). “*Blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Ps 113:2). Blessed be Christ, the Lord of all, at whose birth light shone forth; and he enlightened the quarters of the world by the glorious splendour of his rays, and he expelled the error of idols, and he turned all peoples back to his worship * And behold
(333) / they sing glory to him in the Church which he has chosen for his honour. For through his holy birth he was pleased to renew all creatures, and gave hope and salvation to the whole race of mortals * peoples and tongues, glorify and thank the Son who liberated everything, because he has exalted our nature; cry out unending praise always to his holy name.

- 70 “*His lightnings illumine the worlds*” (Ps 97:4). The fair and pleasant sun has shone forth on the birth of the Lord of all who were seated in darkness. Great light has appeared to them, and the heights and the depths rejoice in him, and the darkness of death has been loosened by him * And behold! all creatures raise up glory to the Father, who has sent him and has saved the race of mortals from the thralldom of sinfulness, and made it heir in the kingdom, in the new and incorruptible life * Come, all of us, let us worship with diligence the day of the birth of Christ, our King. And let us all cry out and say: “Thanks-giving to you, Son, Lord of all.”
- 71 *Suḥlāpā* (variation): with (the melody): b-yad slāmā (by means of peace). “*Listen to this, O peoples*” (Ps 49:1). In the month of December in which the earth does not bear fruit, the Lord was pleased to reveal a fruit in the virgin, as the cause of all good, and the good hope to all creatures. He is the true light, Christ the Lord of all; worshipped he be with his Father and the Holy Spirit!
- 72 “*He who kept his covenant with Abraham*” (Ps 105:9). The Only begotten (iḥīdāyā) Son of the Father appeared to Abraham. In the appearance (ḥezwā) and shape (ṭupsā) of man, and in mystery (rāzā), He encountered him in his humanity with which (He too) would appear, of his descent, for the salvation of creatures. And in these two forms which depict the same One, He described His humanity to Abraham.
- 73 *d-Slōṭā*: “*Let my prayer be like incense before you*” (Ps 140:2). O Vigilant One! who came down for our salvation and watched over us, let our prayer and supplication be pleasing to you, O Lord. As you were pleased with the aroma of the incense of Aaron (Exod 30:7-8), the honourable priest inside the tent of the covenant, let the aroma of our supplications be pleasing to you at all times, and make peace in the four quarters of the world.
- 74 *From now and for ever*” (Ps 114:26; 120:8). Let our vigil be pleasing to you, O merciful Lord, and give us feasts of joy, so that we may confess and praise you;

give peace to your Church in the borders of the earth, and abolish in her battles and strifes; through the prayers of the just, of the priests and of the confessors, who loved you, make your peace dwell in the four quarters of the world.

75 *“He shall abide for ever before God”* (Ps 61:7). / On the
 (334) holy altar shall be the commemoration of Mary, virgin and holy Mother, the Mother of God,¹⁰ so that through her prayers wars may come to an end, and the Church and her children sing glory: and we seek from her Son and pray for his love to spare us through the prayer of his mother.

76 *“And he chose them in the simplicity of his heart”* (Ps 78:71). At first Jesus chose twelve fishermen like the number of the twelve tribes of Israel; and then he chose seventy-two like the elders of the time of Moses; and they went out to the four quarters of the world and preached to creation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

77 *d-‘Annidē: “They rejoice and they praise”* (Ps 65:13). As the just are lifted up in the clouds for the encounter with you, may the souls of your servants rise up in paradise and, with the (good) thief, rest in glory. And with the sinful woman may our sins be forgiven; and with the infinite happiness and life which do not pass away, make us rejoice and give us rest and make us worthy of your bridal chamber.

78 *“Sustain me in your word and I will live; and disappoint me not in my hope”* (Ps 118:116). On the great day of your coming, Jesus our Saviour, when your sign commands and all the departed rise up and blow the horn and sound the trumpet, and at the trial (when) all will be judged, in that hour, our Lord, have pity and mercy on your servants and make them worthy to sit in the bridal chamber of your kingdom,

79a *Sabbah*: with (the melody): b-deḥaltā w-ḥadūtā (with awe and joy). The clear truth (srārā galyā) was manifested by the Son of God to his betrothed Church, when it pleased him, in his love, and he came into the world, and preached and taught (the doctrine of) his divinity and his humanity* And he taught that he was¹¹ in the

10, Darmo and all the manuscripts studied except Ms V: ‘Mother of Christ’.

11. Mss M P R: ‘When he was’.

bosom of his Father before the worlds, without beginning (Jn 1:1-3), for he is God * He came to us at the end of times and took our, body, and therewith he redeemed us (Gal 4:4-5), for he is man * The prophets announced him in their revelations, and the righteous showed him through their mysteries, for he is God * He was conceived in the womb for nine months and was then born as a man, for he is man * The angels praised him (Lk 2:14), for he is God * He was laid in a manger (Lk 2:7), for he is man * The star declared him (Mt 2:2), for he is God * He sucked milk, for he

(335) is man * The Persian Magi carried / and brought to him precious gifts with offerings (Mt 2:11), for he is God * He accepted circumcision, and offered sacrifices in the holy temple according to the law (Lk 2:21, 24), for he is man * Simeon called him 'the light to the peoples and glory to the Israelite' (Lk 2:32), for he is God * He was made to flee to Egypt by Herod, the brutal king full of every evil (Mt 2:13), for he is man * The shepherds hastened to honour him, they knelt down and adored him above their staffs (Lk 2:15-16), for he is God * He was nurtured, and grew in stature and wisdom and divine grace (Lk 2:52), for he is man * He was baptized in the Jordan, for he is man * The heavens were opened, for he is God * The Father proclaimed him, for he is man * The Spirit descended upon him, for he is God (Mt 3:13ff.) * He fasted and was tempted, for he is man * He put the wicked one to shame (Mt 4:1ff.), for he is God * He was invited and he went to the house of feasting, both his mother and his brothers (too), with his disciples, for he is man * He changed water and it became wine, and the guests drank and praised his name (Jn 2:1ff.), for he is God * He entered the house of Levi (Lk 5:29ff.), and the house of Zaccheus (Lk 19:5-6) and the house of Simon (Mt 26:6ff.) and ate and drank at the supper and meal, for he is man * He healed the infirm and cured the sick (Mt: 4:23-25), and cleansed the lepers (Mt 8:1ff.) and opened (the eyes of) the blind (Mt 9:27ff.), for he is God * He went out to a mountain to pray and saw the dawn [literally 'he dawned'] there on it in prayer (Mt 14:23), for he is

man* He gave (the power of) walking to the lame and he gave limbs to the paralysed (Mt 15:29–31), for he is God * He slept on board (ship), for he is man * He calmed the sea (Mk 4:36ff.), for he is God * He went up to the mountain, for he is man * He established laws, for he is God* Weary from labour, he sat by the well and asked for water from the Samaritan, for he is man* He revealed her secrets, both open and hidden, and all her actions (Jn 4:6ff), for he is God * He shed tears and wept for Lazarus, and asked and said, ‘where is his tomb?’, for he is man * He called him and raised him from within the tomb by the powerful authority of his divinity (Jn 11:8ff), for he is God * He rode on a colt, for he is man. Infants praised him, for he is God * The Pharisees envied him (Mt 21:1ff.), for

(336) he is man* He performed / signs (Jn 20:30), for he is God * The priests envied him (Mt 27:18), for he is man * The assemblies praised him, for he is God * He went out to Bethany, beyond the city, with his disciples, and passed the night there (Mt 21:17), for he is man * He cursed the fig-tree and suddenly it dried up, and he showed his glory and made known his power (Mt 21:18–19), for his God * Mary anointed him with aromatic ointment, and wiped his body with the hair of her head, for he is man * He remitted her debts, forgave her sins, blotted out her faults and follies (Mt 26:1ff.), for he is God * He ate the statutory Pascha (Peshā) in the upper room with his disciples, for he is man * At the supper he foretold and revealed the wicked deceit of Iscariot (Mt 26:17ff.), for he is God * He took a towel and girded his loins and washed the feet of his twelve (apostles) (Jn 13:1ff), for he is man * He revealed also the denial of Simon the Rock, the head of the disciples (Jn 13:36–38), for he is God * He sweat and prayed and was strengthened by the angel who appeared to him (Mt 26:39ff.), for he is man * He approached him whose ear was wounded, and healed and restored it through his great power (Lk 22:50–51), for he is God * He was taken to his passion, and accepted the spitting (Mt 26:27), and they put on his head crown of thorns (Mt 27:29), for he is man * He repulsed

those who seized him, drove off his ill-wishers, and they fell on their faces to the ground (Jn 18:3), for he is God * He was nailed to the wood, for he is man * He rent the rocks (Mt 27:5), for he is God * They drove the nails through him (Mt 15:24), for he is man * He opened the tombs (Mt 27:52), for he is God * they gave him vinegar (Mt 27:48), for he is man * He rent the temple (Mt 27:51), for he is God * He cried out from the cross (Mt 22:46), for he is man * He darkened the sun (Lk 23:45), for he is God * He accepted death and his body has embalmed (Jn 19:39-40), and laid in a tomb hewn in the rock (Mt 27:59-60), for he is man * He rose from the tomb, and destroyed death, and broke the bars and fortresses of Sheol (Mt 28:6ff.), for he is God * He ate and drank with his disciples after his resurrection, as it is written (Hos 6:2; Lk 24:36ff.), for he is man * He entered through closed doors and saluted [literally, 'inquired after the health of'] his twelve (disciples), for he is God * He showed them / the prints of the nails that were driven into his hands and feet, and he also showed Thomas his side (Jn 20:19ff.), for he is man * He ascended in glory to Him who sent him (Mk 16:19) and he will come at the end to judge all, for he is God * The angels proclaimed of him that he will come in a visible body just as he ascended, for he is man * He sent the Spirit, the Comforter (Pāraqlētā), upon his disciples and made them wise (Acts 2:2-4), for he is God * Constantine searched and sought out and found the wood upon which he was crucified, for he is man * He chose for himself a Church from among all peoples and sanctified her with the glory of his divinity, for he is God * Blessed is He who accomplished His divine dispensation (mdabbrānūtā) for the salvation of men: to Him glory, and on us His mercy, in every moment.

80b *Qānōnā*: with (the melody): M^entu'yay (from error). "Come let us praise the Lord" (Ps 95:1), see 288*.

81 "To you, praside, and for us, hope, and on earth, peace and tranquillity," cried out the vigilers on the day of your birth.

82 *“Praise, the Lord in his sanctuary”* (Ps 150:1) see 330 *

83 Come, all of you, with the vigilers and the Magi and the shepherds, let us adore Christ * It is you, Babe of Wonder, Lord of all, whom the Church honours; protect her children from the Evil One.

84a *Tesbohtā* : “Blessed be the Merciful One” see 57

[Blessed be the Merciful One, who in his goodness has cared for our life with the prophecy * With the eyes of the spirit, Isaiah saw the wonderful child of virginity * Without marriage Mary has given birth to Emmanuel, the Son of God * because from her the Holy Spirit formed the adorable body, as is written * so that it might be perfectly united to the Splendour of the Father in a unique filiation * And at the beginning of his miraculous conception, he was united with him alone in only one substance (qnōmā) * in order that in him might be fulfilled all his (plans) for the salvation, as was pleasing to him * On the day of his annunciation (or his birth), the vigilers praised him with their jubilations in the heights* And also the earthly beings rendered him adoration with offerings, in unique, honour* One is Christ, the Son of God, adored by all in two natures (kyāne) * who in his divinity is born from the Father, without beginning, beyond times * And in his humanity is born from Mary at the end of times, united in body * Neither his divinity (is) from the nature of the mother, nor his humanity from the nature of the Father * The two natures (kyāne) are preserved in their properties, in one person (qnōmā) of one filiation * And just as the Divinity is three persons (qnōme) and one essence (iṭūtā) * so too with the filiation of the Son: in two natures (kyāne) there is only one person (qnōmā) * thus the holy Church has learned to confess the Son who is Christ * We adore, O my Lord, your Divinity, and your Humanity without doubting (division) * *Repeat thrice*: One is the Power, One the Lordship, One the Will and One the Glory * To the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, Amen and Amen *]

85 *Kārōzūtā*: “Eternal Being,” see 345 *

[Let us all stand a right... * O powerful Lord. the eternal Being, who dwells in the heights above, we beseech you * O the One who loved us with your great charity, and honoured the creation of our race with your honourable image (*ṣalmā*), we beseech you * O the One who through the faithful Abraham promised good things to your friends, and who have been revealed to your Church through the manifestation of Christ, we beseech you * O the One who does not desire the perdition of our nature, but (wishes) that it may be converted from the error of darkness to the knowledge of the truth, we beseech you * O the One who alone is the Maker and the Fashioner of creatures and who dwells in splendid light, we beseech you * For the health of our holy fathers (NN),¹² we beseech you * O merciful God who governs everything in mercy, we beseech you * O Christ our Lord, make us victorious in your coming and give peace to your Church which is redeemed by your precious blood and have mercy on us *]

86 *MADRASA* : chief melody. ‘*Unnāyā* (Refrain): Praise to him who has saved us, through his birth from Mary, and has allowed us to participate with him in the kingdom.87 *Bālē* (Stanzas) : The sovereignty of the Lord of all is not comprehended by all, and its boundary may not be depicted by one’s intelligence. That is the distinguished sovereignty where he (alone) is in authority. He becomes small and even becomes great while remaining equal, and having no limit he is as one who has limit. Blessed be the One who has covered his distance, that we may arrive to him * His aspect (*hezwā*) is immeasurable, so that it may be formed in the mind; he listens without ears, speaks without a mouth, does without hands, sees without eyes, and the soul does not pause and cease from (describing) him who is similar. He

12. See above, 33, n. 8

(338) received through his grace the raiment ((a) skemā) of our humanity and surnamed us in his likeness * For there is no place that encircles and contains him; there is no even a plumb [literally, 'depth'] that searches into and grasps him. / Great is his being (ituta), and so his Fatherhood; failed and was conquered (all) the place and mind; and as there is no place that suffices to his being (itūātā), no mind of whom will be able to suffice his Fatherhood ?

88 *Another one* (Madrāsā) : with (the melody) : zel la-qritā (go to the village) or l-arbapenyān (to the four quarters (of the world)).

'*Unnāyā* (Refrain) : Praise to the child, whose Father is from heaven and mother from earth, and (who is) incomprehensible.

89a *Bālē* (stanzas) : A great marvel I saw happening in Bethlehem before the eyes of all creatures: a star that is as one who ministers before the Son of the divine King; a star running, a star guiding, a star leading, a star announcing: messenger star, herald star: (This) star has arrived at the door of the house of the King * Peace to Mary who begets, rears, milks, carries and rejoices! Peace to the small manger, which for us prefigures the holy altar! Peace to the grotto! Peace to the swaddling clothes! Peace to the bridegroom! And peace to Gabriel! Peace in heaven! Peace on earth! Peace to our entire assembly! * There the Books with the birth of the Son, the Lord of mysteries, are sealed! There the crowns of the kings, sons of the heroes, are thrown off before his feet! There the gold, there the myrrh, there the incense, there Joseph, there the crying "holy", there the Jubilations without end!

90 *And they stand up and say Slōtā* : You, O Joyous and Marvellous!, Powerful and Glorious! , Mighty and Warlike!, Strong and Merciful! , Great King of Glory!, Being who existed since forever!, we thank and we adore, we praise always, [Lord of all, Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for ever, Amen.]

- 91 *And they begin* with the Qānōā (with the verses – literally, ‘Canon’) “*Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this glory to the Lord, and said*” : Gloriously I will praise you, see 332 * (Exod 15:1–21). *And they repeat it with all the two verses.*
- 92 *And continue: “Sing to the Lord a new praise: his praise from the ends of the earth”* : The Being who exists from eternity, see 333* (Is 42:10–13; 45:8).
- 93 *Slōtā* : O my Lord, cast into our hearts the seed of your doctrine, and shower on us the drops of your grace, so that we may grow according to your will and we may produce fruits agreeable to your lordship all the days of our life, Lord of all, [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen.]
- 94 (339) “*Listen, O heaven, and I will speak : let the earth hear the words of my mouth*” : sing halleluia, sing halleluia, sing halleluia, O Vigilers, in the birth of the King Christ. see 334 * (Deut 32:1–21).
- 95 *And then they go to the Bema and pray*: To you, the just zealous One, who through your zeal destroy the unjust and who through your wrath annihilate the wicked, and to you who keep your covenant and your goodness toward those who fear your holy name, we beseech: turn O Lord, and forgive and have pity on us as you are wont, at all times, Lord of all, [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen.]
- 96 *And they begin* with Qanone:
Deut 32:21: “*I will also arouse them to jealousy with a ‘no-people’ of mine * and with a ‘foolish people’ I will anger them.*” Blessed is he who has appeared in Ephrata * and who is born in the grotto * the Magi offer him worship * gold, myrrh and incense.
- 97 v. 22: “*Because a fire is kindled from my wrath * and it burns unto the depths of Sheol.*” Praise to the Lord, who arose and came with majesty * and was born in truth * and was called the wonderful.

- 98 *"It devours the earth and its yield * and burns the foundations of the mountains."* Blessed be the wonderful splendour * which is manifested by the angel * and who is born without man * and is called hero.
- 99 v. 23 : *"I will heap up evils upon them * and I will exhaust my arrows upon them."* Blessed be the One who has fulfilled the prophecy * and has appeared to us from the virgin * and is born in the grotto * in Bethlehem Ephrata.
- 100 v. 24 : *"They will be exhausted with hunger and the evil spirils will devour them * and I will surrender them to birds (of prey)."* Blessed be the One who sent to the East * the star in the way of splendour * and revealed his glorious birth * to the inhabited earth which longed for him.
- 101 *"And I will stir the savage beasts among them * with the poisonous snakes which crawl in the dust."* Blessed be the One who is revealed without any doubt * and who was united without confusion * and was born without marriage * and set free every misfortune.
- 102 v. 25 : *Out of doors the sword will cut and in the inner chambers there shall be panic * even if (they are) young men and virgins."* Blessed be the High and Supreme One * who rose and came from heaven * and resided in the chaste womb * as Isaiah announced (7:14).
- 103 *"Both young men and virgins * and children and old men."* Blessed be the eternal Babe * who has come to us from heaven * and dwelt in the virginal womb * as is written by Isaiah (7:14).
- 104 vv. 26-27a : *"I would have said where are they (so) that I might blot out their memory from among men * had not the wrath of the enemy gained strength."* Blessed is he who has descended from above * and has come and dwelt in the world * He has made known to us his high power * let us praise him in every breath.
- 105 v. 27 b. c : *"Lest their oppressors become haughty * and say, / 'our hand is lifted up'."* Blessed be the One who has come according to his will * and resided in us as
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he desired * and was born from the womb * and has given us every joy.

106 vv. 27 d – 28 a : “*And it was not the Lord who did these things * for they are a people devoid of its reason.*” Blessed be he who is mysterious in his being (itūtā) * who guided us aright through his goodness * and was born from his handmaid * and has liberated Adam and his race (sarbtā).

107 vv. 28 b – 29 a : “*And there was no understanding in them * If they were wise they would understand these,*” Blessed be the Being (ityā), the guide of all * and he is born for the sake of all * and has reconciled his Father together with all.

108 vv. 29 b – 30 a : “*And would have insight in their latter end, so that one would chase a thousand away.*” Blessed be the Lord who was made flesh * and was proclaimed marvellous by the angels * and was honoured by the heavenly beings * and the earthly beings were illumined in him.

109 v. 30 b. c : “*And two would drive away a myriad * if their strength had not delivered them up.*” Blessed be the Lord who was made flesh * and was born and acknowledged * and was confessed and proclaimed marvellous * and was extolled and honoured.

110 vv. 30 d – 31 a : “*And the Lord shut them up * for their strength was not like our strength.*” Blessed be the Word who was made flesh * and was born from a virgin * and was seen and touched * and was annoned and glorified

111 vv. 31 b – 32a : *And our enemies are our judges * for their vine (comes) from the vine of Sodom.*” Blessed be the One whose birth illumined all * and the vigilers sang his glory * and announced hope for man * that he is the Saviour of all.

112 v. 32b.c : “*And from the garden of Gomorrah * its grapes (are) bitter grapes.*” Blessed be the One who is born twice * divinely (ityā‘it) and humanly ((a) nāsa‘it) *. eternally before centuries * and humanly today.

- 113 vv. 32d-33a : *“And their clusiers (are) bitter to them * their poison the poison of a dragon.”* Blessed be the One who dwelt among us without becoming small * and raised us to honour * and was not made less * and with his light he has illumined all * and in his love he has accomplished our salvation.
- 114 vv. 33b-34 : *“And the head (is) of a cruel asp * behold it is concealed with me and sealed up in the storehouses.”* Let us all offer up adoration * and jubilations and praises * to the Babe of Wonder * who is born from the virgin.
- 115 v. 35a.b : *“ Mine is the vengeance with which I shall repay them * at the time when their foot slips.”* In your birth are illumined the creatures * and all regions rejoiced * and joys are bestowed * on all peoples and nations.
- 116 v.35c.d : *“Because the day of their ruin is at hand * and the affairs of the future are rushing upon them.”* Come, let us praise and extol * with the Magi, the sons of Persia, * him who, with his birth, reproved * the tyrant Herod.
- 117 v. 36a.b : *Because the Lord will judge / his people * and in*
(341) *his servants he will be comforted.”* Blessed be the Lord who in his love * has come down with his bounty * and was reconciled with his creatures * and has given life to all through his birth.
- 118 v. 36c.d : *“Because he saw that the hand is dominating * and there is no one who helps and supports.”* Blessed be the Lord who in (his) bounty * visited us beyond any merit * and made known to us through his birth that he is * our Saviour from wickedness.
- 119 v. 37 : *“And he will say: where are their mighty gods * those in whom they trusted?”* Blessed be the One who appeared in our flesh * and gladdened all through his birth * and remitted and pardoned our sins * and reconciled us with his Father.
- 120 v. 38a.b : *“And who used to eat the fat of their sacrifices * and drink the wine of their libation.”* You, who in your bounty have made us worthy * of the memorial of your birth, * receive us into your pity * and cause us to delight in your kingdom.

- 121a v. 38c.d : *“Let them now rise up and help you * and be protectors over you.”* Worshipped be your birth, our Life-Giver * in whom is realized the hope of all of us* and in it we are renewed* (and) saved from error.
- 122 v.39a. b : *“See then that I am * and there is no God besides me.”* See therefore that I am * see therefore that I am * see that I am the Lord * and there is no God apart from me.
- 123 v. 39c.d : *“I kill and I give life * I wound and I heal.”* May your will, O Lord, be pleased * through the service of your worshippers * and let our prayers be accepted * before the throne of your lordship.
- 124 vv. 39e–40a : *“And there is no one who escapes from my hands * for I have laid my hand upon heaven.”* Join, O Lord, our hymns * to the hymns of the angels * and our praises to their praises * and our chants to their chants.
- 125 vv. 40b–41a : *“I have said that I live for ever * I shall whet the edge of my sword like lightning.”* Accept, O my Lord, our supplications * and let our prayers be pleasing to you * and grant us our petitions * and do not turn your face away from us.
- 126 v. 41b.c : *“And my hand shall be powerful in judgement * and I will turn vengeance on my adversaries.”* Pour out your grace on us * yes, O my Lord, and hear our prayers * and forgive him who goes astray and does wickedness * seventy times seven.
- 127 vv. 41d–42a : *“And I will surrender my enemies * I will make my arrows drunk with blood.”* Open your door, our Creator * and accept our supplications * and may our prayers please you, * and respond to our petitions.
- 128 v.42b.c : *And my sword will eat flesh * from the blood of the slain and of the captives,* “From heaven may all blessing * from the earth all gifts * and from the Lord all graces * be showered on our assembly.
- 129 vv. 42d–43a : *“and from the head of the crown of the enemy * So now / praise his people, O peoples.”* The angels with their ranks have risen up * and have sung glory
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through their voices * in the birth of the Son of their Master * who has shone forth for their salvation.

- 130 v. 43 b. c: “*Because the blood of his servants is avenged * and vengeance is taken on his adversaries.*” Blessed be the One who in his goodness has made us worthy * of the feast of his birth * and promised to us in his love * that he will cause us to inherit his kingdom.
- 131 v. 43c. d : “*And vengeance is taken on his adversaries * and he makes atonement for his land and for his people*”. Blessed be the Babe who has come * and freed us from error * and (from) the Evil One, death and distress * and has promised us a kingdom.
- 132 *Sabbah* : *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.* It is fitting that we thunder with praise * to the One, the Christ, who gave the light * who through his glorious birth * has prepared for us the path to heaven.
- 133 *‘Alam* : *From everlasting to everlasting.* Let us sing praise to the Lord * with the vigilers in heaven * on this delightful feast * of the birth of the Son of the Living One.
- 134 *And they turn back to the Res Mazmōrā* (head of the psalm): v. 21 : “*I also will arouse them to jealousy with a ‘no-people, of mine * and with a ‘foolish people’ I will anger them*”. Halleluia, halleluia, halleluia. *Let us pray; Peace be with us.*
- 135 *QALE d-SAHRA* (*The Songs of the Vigil*) : *The first*: “*Why rage the peoples?*” *The whole (psalm), with its melody, see 217 * (Ps 2).*
- 136 *The second* : “*O God, give your judgement to the king.*” *The whole (psalm) with its melody, see 267 * (Ps 72).*
- 137 *The third*: “*The Lord said to my Lord.*” *The whole (psalm) with its melody, see 304 * (Ps 110).*
- 138 *And between the psalms they genuflect (sāymin burkā), even if the feast falls on a Sunday.*
- 139 *d-Lelyā* (of Nocturn) : *Suḥlāpā* (of) *Rāzā rabā* (the great Mystery). And it is begun with (the melody): *Gabra Gaṇbara* (hero, literally, ‘mighty man’). “*The Lord reigns*

and has put on majesty” (Ps 93:1); Who will narrate the marvels of the Lord?” (Ps 106:2); “Who is like you, Lord?” (Ps 35:10). d-Surtā (of the Scripture): *Because, even if all creatures became one mouth and one tongue, they would not be able to speak of your greatness, O my Lord*” (Anaphora of Mar Nestorius)¹³. Who would be able to tell your greatness, O our Maker? Because by the first fruit of our race you saved Adam from death. All the peoples who sit in darkness incessantly offer praise to you indeed. They sing and give glory, saying, “holy.” With the holy Cherubim and the Seraphim they confess and say: “Holy, holy, holy is the great day of your birth, because through it is realized for us great hope and salvation.” / Christ, who came for our salvation, have pity and mercy on us; *Repeat*.

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140 *Sabbah* : *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit*. Who would be able to tell (see above).

141 *And they pray* : You, our Creator and Maker of our good, and the Dominator and Guide of our souls in the quiet sign of your will, great King of glory, Being (ityā) who is from ever, we thank and adore and praside [at all times, Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen].

142 *And they begin* : with (the melody) : Malkā Msiḥā da-dnaḥ (the King Christ who appeared). “*The Lord alone has reared him up*” (Deut 32:12); *He has built his sanctuary in the height*” (Ps 78:69). d Surtā (of the Scripture): “*And God created Adam in his image (ṣalmā) and likeness (dmūtā)*” (Gen 1:26-27). The Creator established his image (ṣalmā) in Paradise, and the rebel devil corrupted it by jealousy and error. But the wise Painter, in the womb of the virgin, renewed it, and decorated it with incorruptible colours; and from Bethlehem he established it gloriously. When the Magi knew of it they came in haste to adore him, and with earnestness they presented to him various offerings. And we who learned (of it) also

13. KELAITA, *Liturgy*, 83-84.

- (344) who has come for the salvation of the world. / Praise to you, our Lord; praise to you, Son of God; blessed be the One who has saved us through his birth.
- 147 *‘Alam : From everlasting to everlasting.* Who has ever seen a ewe which carries a young lion and brings it up without being afraid? (cf. Gen 49:9). Mary is the ewe, and Christ is the young lion, and she brings him up without being afraid. Glory to you, Lord, Glory to you, Son of God, who has honoured Mary, who has given birth to you.
- 148 *Nēmar (Let us say) :* O Christ, do not neglect us and do not be far from your worshippers, because in you we have taken refuge, O my Lord. Guide us in your path of life, that we may all sing glory to you, O Lord God.
- 149 *And they enter the Sanctuary with the lights and pray:* Render us worthy, our Lord and our God, that, with pure thoughts and sweet and holy melodies, together with the heavenly hosts and with the Magi and shepherds, we may celebrate the holy feast of the birth of Christ, our Lord and Life-Giver, through your goodness and mercy, Lord of all, [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen.]
- 150 *And they say Qānōnā :* with (the melody) : sogāa (abundance); (but they change them, however, on feasts.) “Praise the Lord from heaven, praise him in the heights,” see 329 * (Ps 148:1). Adored be the Babe, who through the star called Persia to be informed of his birth, and it sent its sons to come and see the King who is born in Judea according to the expectation; they knelt down and adored him, and they offered him gold and offerings. [And they say the rest of the psalm.]
- 151 “Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea-monsters, and all the depths” (Ps 148:7). From the East the Magi carried and brought offerings to our Saviour, and they came to the grotto and knelt down and adored, and offered him gold, myrrh and incense, and cried out to him glory. [And they say the rest of the psalm.]
- 152 “Praise the Lord in his sanctuary, praise him in the firmament of his power” (Ps 150:1). The star in the heavenly heights accomplished its journey and moved the sons of Persia

with great wonder, so that they come and venerate the birth of the King from (the root) of David. [*And they say the rest of the psalm.*]

153 “*Praise the Lord, all you peoples; praise him, all you nations*” (Ps 116:1). Christ, the Son, the feast of whose birth is celebrated today by our assembly, accept our intense vigil and the prayers of those who sing praises, and from the treasure-house of your pity grant our petitions [*And they say the rest of the psalm.*]

154a *Sabbah* : *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.* From the heavenly heights the assemblies of angels sing praise; and with them the earthly beings also shout glory to him, who in his love humiliated himself and took our nature (kyānā).

154b In you, our helper, we place our trust in all hours,
(345) and from your treasure-house now / we beg compassion and mercy, and remission of sins. Pour out your gifts in our hands and have pity on our sins.

155 *And they continue* : “Glory to God in the heights,” , *thrice: one verse* in the sanctuary, *and one* in the nave.

156 *Hpāktā* (a return or coming back) : Long Life! O Babe, whose power has shaken the tyrant kings and whose sign has assembled the angels and men, in order that they might praise him. His power has shaken the vigilers and men to praise him, and all together cry out, saying: Blessed be your birth.”

157 *Kārōzūtā* : Let us stand aright [Let us all stand aright in joy and cheerfulness and let us beseech and say: O our Lord, have mercy on us. *And the people respond* (at every pause): Our Lord, have mercy on us].

O Christ, who is born eternally from the Father without begining, splendour of His glory and likeness (ṣalmā) of His substance (itūtā). (you) who hold and govern the whole universe through the power of His word, we beseech...

158 *O Christ*, who is born temporally at the end of times from virgin Mary, source of holiness, for the salvation of

our nature and for the liberation of all creatures, we beseech...

- 159 *O Christ*, eternal Son and consubstantial with God (yaldā ityāyā w-bar itutā), child generated before the stars, (you) who are born today in Bethlehem for the sealing of prophecy, we beseech...
- 160 *O Christ*, Lord of David through your divinity and son of David through your humanity, (you) who are born today in the house of David for the confirmation of the prophecy of your father David, we beseech...
- 161 *O Christ*, who is born today from the virgin Mary without marriage, Babe of Wonder and Son of Marvel, God Almighty of the ages, Prince of Peace, according to the revelation (buddāqā) of Isaiah (9:6), the most glorious of prophets, we beseech...
- 162 *O Christ*, Sun of Justice, who shone forth from the house of David, who have today manifested your glory in our human nature for the completion of the prophecies of Jeremiah and of Malachi (Jer 23:5-6 ; Mal 4:2), we beseech...
- 163 *O Christ*, who in your birth according to the flesh was praised by the angels and announced by the shepherds, and witnessed by Simeon and acknowledged by Anna, we beseech...
- 164 *O Christ*, in whose holy birth, the angels cried out, "Glory to God in the heights" and announced, "Peace on earth and good hope for the sons of men," we beseech...
- 165 *O Christ*, who in your birth from the daughter of Eve have dispensed and annulled the sentence that condemned Eve, and promised a new life and good hope and salvation for all the children of Eve, we beseech...
- 166 *O Christ* the second Adam, who in your birth from the daughter of Eve have renewed oldness of the first Adam and prepared room for him in heaven instead of the room in the dissolvable paradise, we beseech...

- 167 *For* peace and tranquillity of kings and princes;
for the bond of love and concord of priests and high-
(346) priests; and for the prosperity of the year and the
increase of fruits, and for the building up / of the whole
universe, we beseech...
- 168 *For* the preservall and safety of the head of pastors,
our Holy Father Mar (N) Pope of Rome¹⁵ and Mar (N)
Catholicos Patriarch, in all prosperity and victory in
view of the glory of the priesthood and the exaltation
of the faith; for the growth of the flock of rational
sheep, we beseech...
- 169 *For* the bishops and metropolitans, especially for our
blessed father and prelate Mar (N), metropolitan
bishop, that they be strong and courageous for the
glory of the Church and for the pastoral care of the
community and for the sustenance of the orthodox
faith, we beseech...
- 170 *For* the priests, so that they be sanctified in chastity,
and for the deacons, that they be genuinely modest, and
for the splendour of all the covenant of the Church,
the daughter of the King, we beseech...
- 171a *O God*, the Merciful, who showed mercy on us through the
birth of your beloved Son, and did not reckon against
us our transgressions of the former generations, but
brought back to the path of life with the glorious
fruit which has been manifested from you, let him
govern our lives according to the intention of your
will, we beseech...
- 172 *O Ohrist*, who, with your Father and Holy Spirit, with the
praises of angels in the highest heaven, are glorified,
and with the jubilations and adorations of the earthly
ones on the earth are adored and acknowledged, we
beseech...
- 173 *O Christ*, tranquillity of those above and peace of those here
below, sustain your Church which is in all four quarters

15. Darmo and all the manuscripts studied except Ms V omit 'Pope of Rome'.

of the world and guard its inhabitants; make your worshippers worthy to celebrate the holy feasts of your dispensation (mdabbrānūtā) with joy and good deeds which reconcile you, and have mercy on us.

- 174 *Slota*¹⁶: To you O Babe, hidden from ages, who are born from the Father without time; *Repeat*. Living image (ṣalmā) and immutable icon (yūqnā) of your Father, who from the mysterious bosom of your Father are eternally born, and took flesh from the womb sealed immutably with virginity, and were shaped with the figure (dmūtā) of a servant from the order of corporeal beings, material and endowed substantially with speech, and who mercifully saved the material creation and the fourfold elements from submission to sin, and who cause the chariot of Cherubim shudder by your brightness, and the manner of your government inspires the Seraphim with awe, and who fly and circle in the air, changing place on the wings of fire and wind; and the heavens and earth and all that is in them are shaken by you; all the natures immaterial and material adore the nature of your being (itutā), and the ranks
(347) of eternal powers, / with utterances devoid of voice, extol the visible glory of your divine presence (skintā-Shechinah); you who were sent in the fullness of times for the salvation of our nature, made (yourself) slave to a sinful death, while, beyond breaths, times, moments and space, up the simple, unlimited nature of your Divinity is lifted; you who sealed and ratified the prophetic words with your second birth, and are adored by the legions of light at your (solemn) entrance into the city of the universe; you who have gathered together the Magi and the shepherds to adore the throne of your Divinity; we pray and entreat and beseech you, cover us, O my Lord, with holy conduct just as you are wrapped in swaddling clothes, and cause the heavenly light to shine upon our faces as

16. DARMO, Breviarium I, 576. adds: 'of Mar Elia, the superior of 'Ayna.' MS C, fol. 24v, adds; 'of Mar Elia III surnamed Abu Halim.' Cf. also MATEOS, Lelya-Sapra, 13-14.

you caused it to shine on the shepherds, and cause the divine happiness which you have let shine in the whole world, to shine in our hearts, so that together with the angelic choirs we may cry out: "Glory to God in the heights, and on earth peace, and good hope for men" (Lk 2:14), and make us worthy to enter the sanctuary-grotto with the shepherds who honoured your birth, and let us run quickly with the feet of our thoughts to adore the heavenly cradle, the sanctuary of your Divinity (itūtā). While we carry with the kings, the sons of Persia, the rational fruits of our lips and immaterial gifts for the worship of your kingdom; and fortify us to celebrate your feasts and your festivals with the honour which suits your lordship, so that we may enjoy the banquet of Jerusalem, the place of your divine presence (skintā-Shechinah); deliver and save us from the Herodean jealousy of our hidden enemies through the help bestowed on us by you, so that we may exalt your birth and worship your Father and praise the day of your birth, and kiss with our lips the swaddling clothes of your garment. May our service, O my Lord, be pleasing to you, and our prayers convincing to you, and our intercession honouring to you, and our supplications reconciling to you; may the mercy and compassion of your Divinity be for the remission of the debts of your people and for the forgiveness of the sins of all the sheep of your flock, whom you have chosen for yourself in your goodness and mercy, Lord of all, [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen.]

- 175 *Another*¹⁷ : To you O Babe, eternal and temporal, who are born eternally from your Father before ages and in time were seen from Mary the perpetual virgin, who conserved virginal sanctity. With the eyes of the
 (348) fiery spirit, luminously in the holy place / Isaiah saw your splendour (Is 6:1-3), and in the fiery chariot Ezekiel recognized your mysteriousness (gnizūtā) (Ezek

17. Darmo adds: 'of the same Mar Elia.' MS C adds the same as above in n. 16.

1:26-28), and in the heavenly clouds, Daniel saw your mightiness as an aged one (Dan 7:9), and Malachi named your divinity 'Sun of Justice', of 'Healing' (Mal 4:2) that strikes fire from his tongue. You are the One whose existence is adorned with rational flames, divine candles; and whose majesty is praised by the legions of Cherubim and Seraphim of keen faculties and illumined intellect, and whose mysterious throne of sovereignty of lordship is celebrated by all the ecclesial order. You are the One whom the prophetic persons symbolically contemplated in the mystery of their words, and whom the apostolic persons saw in a real shape with their material eyes, and the ecumenical announcers openly preached in all the created world. The orthodox doctors have proclaimed you as divine and human. You are the One who, through the working of your grace, have chosen and through the overshadowing of your power have sanctified the honourable Mary, the beautiful virgin and the beauty of virgins, from whom you are born wonderfully; at her maternal knees you were brought up like a child; she who was the bodily chariot for your glory, and the shining cloud for the shadow of your sweetness, and the spring of purity and stream of holiness and token of virginity and icon of chastity and temple of light and mansion of glory, and the bodily thurible full of benevolence, and the splendid crown of the holy Catholic Church, and the shining garland of right orthodoxy of apostolic glory! Thus, our Lord and our God, turn away and remove from us the rods which scourge us and troubling violence, and give us permanent tranquillity that does not falter, and a lasting peace that does not encompass, and give us a chaste life and days full of all prosperity, and bestow on all your people and your flock your gracious gifts, and guide them towards the path of your kingdom with the support of your right hand, and shower on them the voluntary rain from your holy cloud, crown the heads of the faithful with luminous crowns and make us worthy to be your worshippers with the fiery Cherubim, to offer up glory, honour, acknowledgement and adoration to you. Creator of

(349) light through his grace, and Ordainer of darkness in his wisdom, and his doctrine and divinity are not comprehended by the spiritual and bodily ones, Lord of all, [Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever, Amen.]

176a [*Mazmōrē d-Saprā (Morning Psalms)*]¹⁸

“*Praise the Lord all the earth*” (Ps 100). In the beginning, God, Lord of light, created light; he has created light and fashioned the light, he who rests upon the light and dwells in the light. The angels marvelled at that light, we offer up praise to you.” [“Come before his presence.... and his faithfulness unto (all) generations.” *And they say* sabbah and ‘alam, and the head of the psalm: “Praise the Lord all the earth.”]

177a *Another*: In the beginning the word was with God (Jn 1:1) in existence, and at the end manifested in our body without investigation and search; the mysteries and types and allegories that the prophecy prefigured from the beginning were explained to us through the good news which the angels gave to the shepherds about the adorable and new child, who is born for us in the grotto in Ephrata, the town of David, and he impelled the creatures through his birth to offerings and adorations, and awoke the four quarters of the world with the new praises of the songs of the vigilers and shepherds who announced the renewal; and the yoke of error and of death was dispelled from the habitable earth, and the human nature was liberated from the servitude of sin, and he enlightened our race with knowledge and illumined in us the faith: *Lord, Giver of light*, [*we offer up praise to you*] [*And they say*: Let us pray. Peace be with us. *Slotā*: To you, O my Lord, all creatures whom you have created lift up praise and acknowledgement, for you alone are their true light, and the One who enlightens the worlds and creatures in your goodness and mercy, Lord of all, Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for ever, Amen.]

18. For the ‘ordinary’ of Saprā, cf. BEDJAN *Breviarium* I 29–39.

- 178 *"He sits in the protection-place [of the Most High]"* (Ps 91).
When the Creator fashioned that light, the angels
marvelled at it, and when he appears every morning,
they will praise him, and we too. [*And they continue:*
"He sits in the protection-place... show him my salvation."
When the Creator fashioned that light...]
- 179 *Sabbah* : *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy*
Spirit. 'Alam: From everlasting to everlasting. When you
created that diffused light, the angels praise you, and
they knew that he who created that light, he himself
created them!
- 180 *"He sits in the protection-place"* (Ps 91:1). By the angels
you are praised and by men you are honoured, and all
together cry out and say: "Blessed be your birth, O
Christ our Saviour." [The rest as in the ordinary of
Saprā]
- 181 *d-Saprā* : with (the melody): *Abūn d-ba-smayā* (Our
Father who (art) in heaven). *"Praise the Lord, all the*
earth, and serve the Lord with joy" (Ps 100:1–2a). May
peace abound for you, O people of God, because Christ
is born, the Light of the world; *Repeat.*
- 182 *"Enter into his presence with praise"* (Ps 100:2b). Blessed
be Christ, who on the day of his birth has gladdened
the earth and made heaven cheerful.
- 183 *"Know that he is the Lord our God"* (Ps 100:3a). Peace
on earth, glory in heaven and good hope to all creatures.
- 184 *"It is he who has made us, and not we"* (Ps 100:3d). The
assemblies of angels rejoice today, and together with
(350) us they render / glory.
- 185 *"We are his people, and the sheep of his flock"* (Ps 100:3b).
A new sun is risen for us in the grotto, and has
received the gifts which the East has sent.
- 186 *"Enter through his doors with thanksgiving, and into his*
courts with praise" (Ps 100:4a). 'Babe of Wonder', the
son of Amoz called him, and named him 'Hero' and
titled him 'Prince' (Is 9:6).

- 187 *'Thank him and bless his name'* (Ps 100:4b). On the day of your birth, O Jesus our Saviour, the creatures rejoice, those on high with those below.
- 188 *"Because the Lord is good, and eternal his goodness"* (Ps 100:5a). Behold all the prophets sing praise, because (with him) arrived the sealing of mysteries.
- 189 *"And his faithfulness for ever and ever"* (Ps 100:5b). This is a grand feast of the believing Church, let us honour it all with one accord.
- 190 *"Sabbah: with the first (strophe). Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.*
- 191a *'Alam: From everlasting to everlasting. Pour out your goodness, O Christ our Saviour, and bless the congregation that celebrates your feast.*
- 192 *And they continue: At the dawn of the day, see 34, [At the dawn of the day, it is you O Lord, (whom) we praise: for you are the saviour of all creatures: Give us in your mercy: a day full of peace: and make us fit for the forgiveness of sins * Do not cut off our hope and do not shut your door in our face: and do not refuse us your care: and do not repay us as we deserve, O God: for you alone know our weakness * sow, O our Lord, in the world: love and peace and concord: and raise up priests and kings and judges: and pacify the princes: and heal the sick, and protect the healthy, and forgive the debts of all the sons of men.]*
- 193a *d-Bārek: Adoration to the Babe, who through the star called the Magi to come to adore him; and they carried gifts and offered to his lordship gold and myrrh and incense * May peace and mercy and goodness abound for all the nations, because the saviour of the creatures is born, and the Giver of good (gifts) * Glory to the Father in the heights, and hope on earth and peace, because the Saviour of all the people is born, and the Life-Giver, the Son of the Most High.*
- 194a *da-Lbāktā (of Chant): with (the melody) : amrā 'cdtā (the church says). Persia says when it sent the Magi with the offerings to the country of Judea: Go in peace,*

travel in peace, arrive in peace, the peaceful One of all peace keep you in peace: Go in peace and enter into Jerusalem and enquire after his welfare (slāmā), and ask and search for the Child born in that territory: Bend the knees and adore him, and offer before him your offerings, when saying: "Greetings to you, O King, King of kings, King of ages": Kings of Persia and kings of India (Hendō) with the kings of China (Sin) have bowed their heads and adored him, the King who is from (the root) of David: The kings of Tarsis (tarsis) and of the distant islands, the kings of Sheba (Shā) with those of Saba have brought gold of Ophir: And behold! the feast of the day of his birth resounds today in the four quarters of the world, and men and angels render praise to the One who sent him.

- 195 *Tesbohlā*: The star on high moved forward and indicated to the Magi on earth that the King Christ was born. Come, (351) let us prostrate and adore / him * The stone which Daniel saw and which was cut out by no (human) hand (Dan 2:34) is Christ, born from the virgin without marriage * O you who have reconciled height and depth by your birth adorable and glorious, reconcile, Lord, the priests and kings, and with your mercy strengthen your Church.
- 196 *And then, Qaⁿddisā Allāhā with solemn melody of the feasts.*
- 197 *Marmitā d-RAZE*: (until *Sawmā* (Lent) except for commemorations): "Sing to the Lord a new song," see 289 * (Pss 96, 97, 98).
- 198 *Aqqaptā*: (on all feasts of our Lord): "I will thank you in the great assembly," see the section on the page 239 * (Ps 35:18) ¹⁹.
- 199 *d-Qānkē*: *Suḥlāpā* (variation): la bāhtinan (we are not ashamed). "From the beginning I have begotten you O Child" (Ps 110:3); "And before the sun is his name" (Ps 72:17); *d-Surtā* (of the Scripture): "He who was hidden for the ages in God who created all" (Eph 3:9). Hidden

19. DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 581, adds: " 'Unnaya: "And among many peoples I will sing to you" (Ps 35:18b). "

was this birth from the powers on high who serve you, O Lord, and although you are not removed from the seat among the Cherubim, you have filled the earth, Saviour of all, with your revelation in flesh, and because of this with the angels we shout, "Praise to God in the heights," and then with these shepherds who announced and said, "Peace on earth," we beseech from you, O good hope for our souls! forgive and have mercy on us; *Repeat*.

- 200 *Sabbah* : *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit*. Through your holy Cross, our Saviour, angels and men became one flock and one holy Church; behold! all the creatures cry out, "Lord of all, praise to you!"
- 201 *Surrāyā* : "A hero was born in her [Sion] and established her * The Lord will reckon his people in the book" (Ps 87:5-6). *Let us honour the birth of Christ with odes of the spirit, halleluia, halleluia, halleluia*.
- 202 *Punnāyā* (response, literally, 'return') : "This One was born there * the great who dwell in it will sing" (Ps 87:6-7) * *The Birth of Christ*.
- 203 *Sabbah* : *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The Birth of Christ*
- 204 *Zummārā* : with the melody : *smaya mest 'aen (the heavens narrate)* : "Lord said to me, that you are my son * and today I have begotten you * ask of me and I will give you * the peoples for your heritage * and the ends of the earth (as) your dominion" (Ps 2:7-9).
- 205 *d-Rāzē* : It is itself *Res qala* (principal chant). "Sing to the (352) Lord a new song" (Ps 149:1); "The universe and its inhabitants" (Ps 24:1); "Joy in all the earth" (Ps 48:2). *d-Surtā* (of the Scripture): "The glory of the Lord shined on them" (Lk 2:9). The entire universe was filled with great glory and joy at the birth of the King Christ. All the powers and assemblies of angels together with us cry out and say: "Glory in the heights, and peace and tranquillity on earth" (Lk 2:14), because his only begotten (Son) (*iḥidāyā*) has appeared to us in flesh;

and his power has been announced among the gentiles,
and he has ascended in glory to his Father; *Repeat.*

- 206 *And they say the Creed composed by the three hundred and
eighteen Fathers who assembled in the city of Nicea see 345 **
- 207 *And the priest celebrates the second Anaphora (Quddāsā) [of Mar
Theodore Mopsuestia], with which (Mass) is to be celebrated
from Subbārā (Annunciation) up to Osānā (Palm Sunday).*
- 208 *And after Had Abā Qaⁿddisā (One, the Father, Holy), they
draw aside the veils of the sanctuary and the choirs line
up in order in the Qānkē [chancel of the sanctuary] and
afterwards those who are inside begin softly, and say:*
- 209 *“Awful are you (D’ḥil-A(n)t), Most High God in your
sanctuary, for ever and ever” (cf. Ps 68:35); “Blessed
be the glory of the Lord from his place” (cf. Ezek
3:12); and they repeat it in loud voice, and the people
who are in the nave respond the same.*
- 210 *Bātē (Stanzas) : said from the Qānke (chancel) : “The Lord
said to me, that you are my son, and today I have
begotten you” (Ps 2:7), halleluia, halleluia. “Awful are
you...”*
- 211 *In the chief ivory palaces the daughters of kings sing praises
to you with glory (cf. Ps 45:8-9), halleluia, halleluia.*
- 212 *[Refrain from the nave] “Awful are you...”*
- 213 *Aqqaptā (addition) : The coal which the prophet saw, the angel
held with pincers (Is 6:6), and now the priests in the
sanctuary celebrate it in their hands * Come together, O
peoples, let us draw nigh to it with holiness of our
bodies and of our souls; this is indeed the mystery that
was hidden, and which is given for our sake for the
remission of sins, halleluia, halleluia! And when it
comes to an end, the deacon who announced, cries out:
“Praise to the living God.” And those in the nave say:*
- 214 *‘Unnāyā d-Bēm : Behold! the body and the propitiating
blood are offered on the living and lifegiving altar in
the holy church, and it will be received on the holy
and glorious and spiritual altar, the one that is the
true one in heaven.*

- 215 Come together, O peoples, let us draw nigh to it with holiness of our bodies and of our souls; this is indeed the mystery that was hidden, and which is given for our sake for the remission of sins, halleluia, halleluia!
- 216 *Bālē (Stanzas)* : “Behold! / a virgin shall conceive and bear
(353) a son, and his name shall be Emmanuel” (Is 7:14)*
- 217 Come together....(see above).
- 218 ‘For you is born this day in the city of David a saviour who is the Lord Christ’ (Lk 2:11).
- 219 *And they continue* : Your body and your blood, O my Lord, you have given us to eat: How many mouths could we have to praise your name! ?
And with Lbakta (chant) is said [turn to page 350] and they repeat the same.
- 220 *Bālē (stanzas)* : Behold! our eyes have seen and our hands have taken the bliss which the angels on high have given to us.
- 221 The memorial of your passion and the monument of your death is your body which is with us.
- 222 In your birth, O our Lord, the universe rejoices and sings praises to the Father who has sent you.
- 223a Peace on high, and tranquillity below, because angels and men are reconciled in you.
- 224 *Tesbohtā* : of ‘after reception of the Mysteries’ : Strengthen, O our Lord; see 346 *. [Strengthen, O our Lord, the hands which have stretched out and taken the most holy unto the forgiveness of sins * Make them worthy to bring forth fruits everyday for your divinity * Make the lips which have praised (you) within the sanctuary worthy to sing glory * May the ears which have heard the sound of your praises, O my Lord, not hear the voice of terror * May the eyes which have seen your great mercy, O my Lord, also see your blessed hope * Dispose also the tongues which have cried out ‘holy’ for the speaking of truth * Make the feet which have walked in the churches walk in the region of light * Renew the bodies which have eaten your living

body unto new life * To our congregation, which has adored your divinity, (*here they genuflect*) give more (of) all helps * and may your great love abide with us and make us abound in it for breaking forth (with) glory * and open the door to the prayer of us all, and may our service also enter your presence.]

225 *And they continue* : And take away from us, [see 346* : And take away from us all harms, and increase in our place peace and mercy * so that, on the day of your appearance, we may live before you, and may go out to meet you according to your will * Through (the singing of) Osana, we will thank your name for your grace which (is) for our race * Great, indeed, is your mercy towards our humankind, and your love has appeared in us mortals * and you have cancelled our debts through your atonement : Praise to your name for your gift * Blessed be your glory : within your place : you remit our debts. because you are merciful * And make us all worthy in your goodness to thank and adore your divinity (*here they genuflect*) and your lordship : at all moments we will offer up praise, Amen and Amen.]

226 *And the deacon says* : Let us all, therefore, who [Let us all, therefore, who by the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit have been drawn near and deemed worthy to partake in the reception of these glorious, holy, life-giving and divine mysteries, give thanks with one accord and praise God who gives them.]

227 *And they conclude as usual.*

CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHALDEAN AND MALABAR OFFICE FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST THROUGH THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

I. Origins in the Manuscript Tradition

Although very little is known about the early history of the Chaldean and Malabar Divine Office, its antiquity, richness and beauty call for no proof nor confirmation. The primitive office consisted mainly of psalms, and readings from the New and the Old Testaments. To this primitive basis of the office were added in the course of time ecclesiastical compositions such as those of the celebrated early Syriac Fathers like Ephraem (d. 373) and his friend Jacob, bishop of Nisibis, Catholicos Simeon bar Sabba'ê (d. ca 341–344), Marutha of Maipharkat (d. ca 420), Narsai (d. 520) and Babai the Great (ca 550–628).¹

The East Syrian Rite has kept and handed down faithfully its ancient tradition of the common prayer.² Transmission down through the centuries did not, of course, take place without creative interventions and reforms.

The first stage of this process, as Bar Hebraeus (1225–1286) has testified, was the organization of the ferial propers for the cathedral office by the Patriarch Simeon bar Sabba'ê.³ He

1. See the Syriac introduction in BEDJAN, *Breviarium*, 7; cf. also PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*, 2ff.; TAFT, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 226.

2. See the Syriac introduction of Cardinal Tisserant to Bedjan's *Breviarium*, 5, para. 3. For the ET of the same, cf. PUDICHERY, *Ramsa* Appendix II.

3. BAR HEBRAEUS, *Chronicon*, vol. 3, 33–34; GISMONDI, *Commentaria* I, 14–16; II, 9–12. For the ET of these ferial propers, cf. MACLEAN,

arranged the daily Divine Office into two "weeks" and alternating "choirs" called the *Qadmāyē* (First) and the *Ahrāyē* (Last).⁴ According to this division, the weeks and choirs alternate thus: if Sunday is of *Qadmāyē*, then the following Monday, Wednesday and Friday will be of *Qadmāyē*, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday will be of *Ahrāyē*, and vice versa. This age-old arrangement is still in use today.⁵

The second stage in the formation of the East Syrian Divine Office was the Synod of Seleucia Ctesiphon in 410, where it was decreed and defined that the ritual prayers were to be said according to the use of the Church of Seleucia Ctesiphon, see of the Catholicos.⁶

The third and the most important stage was the reform undertaken by the Catholicos Iso'Yahb III (650/651–658) at the Dairā 'Ellāitā (ܕܝܪܐ ܐܠܝܬܐ Upper Monastery) of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham in Mosul.⁷ The outcome of this reform remains the present day structure of the East Syrian liturgical year with

Offices, 1–167, and for the German translation, cf. MOLITOR, *Chaldaisches Brevier* 82–85, 102–109, 126–154. For the ET of the paschal propers, cf. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 315–411, and of the propers of Sundays and week days of the Annunciation–Nativity cycle, cf. MOOLAN, *Annunciation*, 64–145.

4. Besides, we also see a third week, called *Mes'aye* (Middle), i.e., 'middle Friday.' This may be because of Friday's importance in the East Syrian Tradition. Special psalms are chosen for this middle Friday; cf. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 384*; BADGER, *Nestorians* II, 416–417.

5. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 2.

6. CHABOT, *Synodicon*, 266–267, canons 12 & 13; BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, (introduction) 8; TAFT, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 225.

7. The great intellectual centres which maintained classical Syriac in use were the Convents at Nisibe, Tagrit and the Province around the Tigris River; cf. LEROY, *Manuscripts syriaques*, 32; VAN UNNIK, *Questions*, 148–149. The Upper Monastery, the foundation date of which is unknown, was situated on the bank of the Tigris in Mosul. It was there Patriarch Iso'Yahb III resided in 650/651–658, and there that he determined what would become the almost definitive norms for the reform of the Chaldean liturgy. The contributions of Gabriel de Kaskar (d. 738/739) and Abraham Dasandad (d. 9th century), by whose names this monastery was later known, perhaps because they were superiors of it, were also of importance for the development of the Chaldean Liturgy. Today all that remains of this monastery is the church in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary ('at-Tahra the Church of the Pure),

its nine seasons.⁸ A final and decisive redaction of this liturgical cycle was done again at the Upper Monastery ca 1250.⁹

The last significant stage of reform was the determination to purge the Divine Office of all its real or supposed theological errors due to Nestorianism, if indeed there existed any. This took place in 1853 at the synod of the Chaldean Catholic Church in the monastery of Rabban Hormizd in Alqos, north of Mosul.¹⁰ It was Paul Bedjan, a Chaldean Lazarist,¹¹ who in 1886–1887 executed the decisions of this synod and brought to light his edition, the present three-volume Chaldean Breviary: *Breviarium iuxta ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldeorum*.

The volumes of this Breviary in use today are a reprint of the above, made under the supervision of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches in Rome, in 1938, for the use of the Catholic Chaldeans and Syro-Malabars. These volumes contain the various hymns from the *Hudra*, *Gazza* and *Kaskul*.¹²

Since we do not have any early evidence whatsoever regarding the structure and content of the office of the feast of the Nativity of Christ prior to the 7th century reform of Iso' Yahb III, we are forced to limit ourselves to the sources of later centuries. We have, therefore, made recourse to all the available manuscripts of the *Hudra* and *Gazza* which contain the office for the Nativity, to uncover its structure and development down through the centuries in the East Syrian manuscript tradition.

rebuilt in 1744; cf. RUCKER, *Obere Kloster*, 180–187; FIEY, *Mossoul chretienne*, 126–132; BADGER, *Nestorians*, vol. 2, 17; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 27; Office divin, 255ff.; TAFT, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 227; YOUSIF, *Kult, Dichtung*, 454–455.

8. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 461–464.

9. BADGER, *Nestorians*, vol. 2, 22; BICKEL, *Conspectus*, 88, cited in RUCKER, *Obere Kloster*, 181, n. 2.

10. VOSTE, *Synode chaldeen*, 68–69.

11. VOSTE, *Paul Bedjan*, 45–102; PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*, 5, n. 19.

12. *Hudra* means 'cycle' and is the principal liturgical book containing offices for the entire liturgical year. *Gazza* means 'treasury' and contains additional chants for the feasts and commemorations. *Kaskul* means 'collection from all' and contains the complete text of offices for the week days throughout the liturgical year; cf. BADGER, *Nestorians*, vol. 2, 22–23; MATEOS, *Lelya Sapra*, 5–14; PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*, 6–7.

II. Hudra and Gazza Manuscripts

We have divided the manuscripts into two sections, namely Hudra and Gazza manuscripts, as they are two different, though complementary, books. Although manuscripts of the Hudra and Gazza are available in the Middle East, the present political circumstances there made them inaccessible to us. We were forced, therefore, to restrict our study to the manuscripts in European, Indian and U.S collections. But we do not think that further study of supplementary manuscripts would lead to new conclusions. One does not see much variety and development in the manuscripts at hand. Rather they show that the text had been relatively stable throughout the manuscript tradition, and we have no reason to think that the manuscripts unavailable to us would show anything different.

A. Hudra Manuscripts under study

All available Hudra manuscripts¹³ of the European and Indian collections which we know to contain office for the feast of the Nativity are made use of in our study.¹⁴ However, we have not utilized the Hudra manuscripts in U.S collections either because they were unobtainable or less important.¹⁵ All the Vatican and Indian Hudra manuscripts were consulted in the original; the others were available in photocopy in the Library of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome.

1. Brit. Mus. Add. 7177 (1484 A.D)¹⁶ = Ms A

This manuscript is a Hudra for the whole liturgical year. According to the information given on the fol. 320v, it was prepared according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham.¹⁷ The office for the feast of the Nativity is given on fol. 18r–26v. Macomber holds that many

13. For a detailed chronological list of the known Hudra manuscripts, cf. MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 120–134; See also BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198, n. 9; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, xix; MOOLAN, *Annunciation*, 147–153. For the Hudra manuscripts in Indian collections, which we have consulted, cf. APREM, *Trichur*, 361–363.

14. MOOLAN, *Annunciation*, 154–167.

15. *Ibid.*, 146. One Hudra manuscript in Indian collections, described in APREM, *Trichur*, 362, N. 26, also was unavailable.

16. ROSEN-FORSHALL, *Catalogus I*, 55–56.

17. See above 79, n. 7.

leaves at the beginning of this manuscript were added in the 18th century.¹⁸

2. Vat. Borg. Syr. 150 (15th century)¹⁹ = Ms B

This Hudra according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham contains the portions of the office for the feast of the Nativity on fol. 20v-33r. In the preface of this manuscript, Rabban Brikiso, Abbot of Beth Kokhe, asserts that the precise arrangement of the liturgical seasons therein was the outcome of the erudite codification of Patriarch Iso' Yahb III.²⁰

3. Vat. Syr. 83 (1538 A. D)²¹ = Ms C

According to the introduction on fol. Iv of this manuscript, this, too, is a Hudra following the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 17v-33r.

**4. Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library: Ms 25 (1598 A.D)²²
= Ms D**

Hudra for the entire liturgical year. As is stated on fol. Iv. of this manuscript, it is according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The office for the feast of the Nativity is given on fol. 19r-39r. This Ms also contains three East Syrian anaphoras of Qurbana, but the anaphora of Addai and Mari does not contain the words of Institution.

5. Vat. Syr. 86 (16th century)²³ = Ms E

The office for the feast of the Nativity is given on fol. 11v-18v of this Hudra manuscript for the entire liturgical year

18. MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 127, n. 1.

19. SCHER, *Borgia*, 281. Cf. also MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 126, N. 15.

20. See the preface of the Ms, 1-5. Mateos gives a French translation of the preface of Ms Camb. Add. 1981, fol. 2v-4v, described in WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue* I, 164-168, and it is the same preface given in Ms Vat. Borg. Syr. 150; cf. *Lelya-Sapara*, 461-464.

21. ASSEMANI, *Catalogus* II, 456-467; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198, n. 4; MATEOS, *Lalya-Sapara*, xix; MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 127, N. 21. The correct date of the Ms is given on fol. 547v as October 19, 1538. See the discussion on this date in MOOLAN, *Annunciation*, 157, n. 15.

22. APREM, *Trichur*, 361-362; MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 128, N. 29; VAN DER PLOEG, *Syriac Manuscripts*, 137, N. 11.

23. ASSEMANI, *Catalogus* II, 476-480; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198, n. 9;

according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham.

6. **Camb. Add. 1981 (1607 A.D)** ²⁴ = Ms F

As the introduction on fol. 2v and the colophon on fol. 365v-366r state, this is a Hudra for the complete year according to the use of the Upper monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 15v-22v.

7. **Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library: Ms 27(1681 A.D)** ²⁵
= Ms G

Hudra for the entire liturgical year, as is stated on fol. lv, according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. This Ms was divided into two rebound volumes at Trichur in 1928. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 21v-34r of the first volume.

8. **Berlin Or. Quarto 1160 (1686 A.D)** ²⁶ = Ms H

Hudra for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 18v-29r.

9. **Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 21**
(16th/17th century)²⁷ = Ms I

This Hudra begins with the 1st Sunday of Annunciation and ends with the office for the feast of the Dedication of the Church. The office for the feast of the Nativity is given on pages 66-96. The contents reveal that this Ms was prepared according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham.

MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 128, N. 25. According to LEVI, *Ricerche*, 187, this Ms was copied in India and is certainly of Malabar provenance.

24. WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue I*, 163-193; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198, n. 9 has misprinted the number of this Ms as 1989; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, xix; MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 128, N. 30.

25. APREM, *Trichur*, 362-363; VAN DER PLOEG, *Syriac Manuscripts*, 137-138, N. 13.

26. ASSFALG, *Syr. Handschriften*, 60-63; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198, n. 9; MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 129, N. 41; see also the clarification on the actual date of this Ms in *Ibid.*, 123, n. 2.

27. APREM, *Trichur*, 361 (N. 21), describes this Ms as Kaskul. But actually this is a Hudra; cf. also VAN DER PLOEG, *Syriac Manuscripts*, 143, N. 27.

10. Vat. Syr. 574 (1721 A.D)²⁸ Ms J

Hudra for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham (see the introduction of the Ms, fol. lv). The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 7v–14r.

11. Athens: National Library 1802 (1724 A.D)²⁹ = Ms K

The title page of this manuscript is missing and hence its place of origin is unknown. But the content and the nature of this Ms seem to suggest the same provenance as those other Hudra manuscripts under study. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 16r – 25r.

B. Gazza Manuscripts

The *Gazza* contains, as we have noted above, services for certain feasts (especially fixed feasts) and commemorations for the entire liturgical year. It comprises anthems, hymns and collects especially for the nocturnal offices, which are not found in the Hudra.³⁰ In the Hudra we see very ancient offices for the whole liturgical year. But later compositions meant exclusively for the nocturnal services were put together in another volume called the *Gazza*. The manuscripts of the *Gazza* vary considerably in their contents.³¹

All available *Gazza* manuscripts of the European, Indian and U. S collections which contain the office for the feast of the Nativity are made use of in our study. With regard to the *Gazza* manuscripts of European collections, we found that the Ms *Berlin: Staatsbibliothek, Turfan B-7 (11th / 12th century)* is only a fragment of a *Gazza* (see below, 85) and therefore we have not included it in our study. Another *Gazza* manuscript, Clemons 318 (see below, 87), was unobtainable. The Librarian of Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey, where this manuscript is located, informed me in a letter of December 3, 1985, that given its fragile state, it is not possible to make direct copy of this manuscript.

28. LANTSCHOOT, *Inventaire*, 100–101; MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 131, N. 63.

29. BROCK, *Athens*, 174–176; MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 131, N. 65.

30. BADGER, *Nestorians*, vol. 2, 23. Many of the more recent *Gazza* Mss also give chants for Vespers, Matins and Mass; see below the Table I.

31. Cf. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 11–12.

i. *A List of the Known Manuscripts of the East Syrian Gazza*

We have tried our best to search out all the East Syrian Gazza Manuscripts, and given here a list of them in chronological order.

1. *Berlin: Staatsbibliothek, Turfan B-55 (9th/10th century)*

Cf. SACHAU, *Literatur*, 964–967. But the identification of this Ms as a Gazza has been disputed. Both BAUMSTARK, *Turfan-Funde*, 330 and MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 124 (N. 2), n. 1, consider it a Hudra.

2. *Berlin: Staatsbibliothek, Turfan B-7 (11th/12th century)*

Described in SACHAU, *Literatur*, 967–970. We include this incomplete manuscript, a fragment of only six leaves, in the group of Gazza manuscripts on the evidence provided by MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 124, n. 1.

3. *Seert: Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 32 (14th century)*

Gazza for the whole year. Some leaves are missing at the beginning and end, so that the text opens with the office for the feast of the Epiphany; cf. SCHER, *Catalogue*, 22–23; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 6.

4. *Jerusalem Greek Patriarchate, Syr. 12 (1458 A.D)*

Gazza of feasts and commemorations for the whole year; cf. CHABOT, *Notice*, 107.

5. *Brit. Mus. Or. 4399 (1488/9 A.D) (See below, 90)*6. *Berlin Or. fol. 620 (1537 A.D) (See below, 90).*7. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 38 (1542 A. D) ³²*

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 350; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

8. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 39 (No date)*

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 351; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

9. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 40 (No date)*

32. All the valuable manuscripts of Diarbekir were transported in 1965 to the Chaldean Episcopal Library at Mardin; cf. MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 125, n. 4; *New Finds*, 479–481.

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 351; BAUMSTARK *Geschichte* 304, n. 2.

10. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 41* (No date)

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 351; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

11. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 42* (No date)

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 351; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

12. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 43* (Before 1573 A.D.)

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 351; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

13. *Diarbekir: Chaldean Episcopal Resid., Ms 44* (Before 1573 A.D.)

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Diarbekir*, 351; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

14. *Brit. Mus. Add. 7178* (1544/45 A.D.) (See below, 90)

15. *Brit. Mus. Add. 7179* (1545 A.D.)

Gazza according to the use of Upper Monastery of Gabriel and Mar Abraham. Some leaves at the beginning of this Ms are missing, and it begins with the office for the commemoration of the Virgin Mary: the office for the Nativity is not found in this manuscript.³³

Cf. ROSEN-FORSHALL, *Catalogus* I, 56–57; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, xix; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte* 190, n. 9, gives this Ms as a Hudra; actually it is a Gazza; cf. also MACOMBER, *Hudra*, 123, n. 2.

16. *Jerusalem Greek Patriarchate, Syr. 39* (1547 A.D.)

This extract of the Gazza contains only the office for the Nativity and Epiphany; cf. CHABOT, *Notice*, 126; in BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2, the number and the date of this Ms are given incorrectly as JerPatr. 29 (1541/2).

17. *Jerusalem Greek Patriarchate, Syr. 4* (1567 A. D.)

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the entire year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. CHABOT, *Notice*, 97–98.

18. *Val. Syr. 590* (16th century) (See below, 90)

33. This manuscript from London was checked in microfilm.

19. *Mosul: Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 47 (16th century)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Manuscripts syriacques*, 17; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.
20. *Mardin: Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 26 (16th century)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. SCHER, *Mardin*, 13; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.
21. *Mingana Syriac 542 (1601 A. D)* (See below, 90).
22. *Jerusalem Greek Patriarchate, Syr. 6 (1645 A.D)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. CHABOT, *Notice*, 99-100.
23. *Houghton Library, Harvard University Syr. 142 (1666 A.D)* (See below, 91)
24. *Clemons Ms 318 (?)*
CLEMONS, *Checklist*, 500, says only that this is an incomplete Nestorian Gazza. He does not give any further details as to its contents, date and provenance.
25. *Alqos: Monastery of our Lady, Ms Vosté 115 (1672 A. D)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. VOSTE *Alqos*, 44-45; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2, numbers this Ms N-DSem 64.
26. *Mosul: Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 48 (1681 A.D)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Manuscripts syriacques*, 17; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.
27. *Alqos : Monastery of our Lady, Ms Vosté 116 (1687 A.D)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. VOSTE, *Alqos*, 45.
28. *Val. Borg. Syr 60 (1687 / 88 A. D)* (See below, 91)
29. *Aqra : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 29 (1693 A.D)*
Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. VOSTE, *Aqra*, 383.
30. *Trickur : Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 13 (1696-1712 A.D)*
This is only a collection of certain prayers to be used on the feasts of our Lord. The office for the feast of the Nativity

is not found in this manuscript; cf. APREM, *Trichur*, 358; VAN DER PLOEG, *Syriac Manuscripts*, 136, N. 5.

31. *Mardin : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 25 (17th century)*

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. SCHER *Mardin*, 12–13; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

32. *Val. Borg. Syr. 86 (17th century ?)* (See below, 91)

33. *Clemons Ms c-3 (17th / 18th century)*

Gazza for the whole year except for Sundays, feasts etc.: cf. CLEMONS *Checklist*, 512. This is an unlocated manuscript. Clemmons depends for his information on I. H. HALL. "Proceedings of the American Oriental Society." JAOS 13 1888 / 89) 182; cf. also BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

34. *Val. Borg. Syr. 87* (No date)

This Ms contains only the second half of the Gazza, and therefore has no office for the feast of the Nativity. This is a revised volume by Catholic Chaldeans, containing also offices for certain feasts borrowed from Latins. Therefore it is probably a work of the 18th century; cf. SCHER, *Borgia* 269; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

35. *Kerkuk : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 30 (1701 A. D)*

Gazza for the whole year; cf. VOSTE, *kerkouk*, 91.

36. *Trichur : Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 14 (1707 A.D)*
(See below, 91)

37. *Mosul : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 49 (1707 A.D)*

Gazza containing offices for the feasts and commemorations. This Ms is of Catholic Chaldean origin, as it contains offices for commemorations such as St Barbara, St Nicholas, St Joseph, introduced by the Chaldean Patriarch Joseph II (1696–1713). It was completed in 1766; cf. SCHER, *Manuscripts syriacques*, 18; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

38. *Mardin : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 27 (1707 A.D)*

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. SCHER, *Mardin*, 12–13; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

39. *Camb. Add. 1980 (1723 A.D)* (See below, 92)

40. *Alqos : Monastery of our Lady, Ms Vosté 117 (1724 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. VOSTE, *Alqos*, 45.
41. *Alqos : Monastery of our Lady, Ms Vosté 118 (1726 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham; cf. VOSTE, *Alqos*, 45; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2, numbers this Ms N-DSem 65.
42. *Alqos : Monastery of our Lady, Ms Vosté 119 (1774 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. This Ms is of Catholic origin, with the adaptations and additions introduced by Patriarch Joseph II; cf. VOSTE, *Alqos*, 46.
43. *Berlin Or. fol. 3181 (1778 A. D) (See below, 92)*
44. *Kerkuk : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 31 (1798 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. This Ms begins with the office for the commemoration of St Barbara on December 4, introduced by Patriarch Joseph II and hence certainly of Catholic origin; cf. VOSTE, *Kerkouk*, 92.
45. *Séert : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 35 (18th Century)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. SCHER, *Catalogue*, 24-25; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.
46. *Aqra : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 30 (1853 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations; cf. VOSTE, *Aqra*, 383.
47. *Kerkuk : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 32 (1876 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the entire year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. This is of Catholic origin, written during the pontificate of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) and Chaldean Patriarch Joseph VI Audo (1848-78). Cf. VOSTE, *Kerkouk*, 92.
48. *Aqra : Chaldean Episcopal Library, Ms 13 (1886 A.D)*
 Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year. Cf. VOSTE, *Aqra*, 383.

ii *Gazza Manuscripts Under Study*

We give here those Gazza Manuscripts used in this study, which contain the office for the feast of the Nativity of Christ. All the Vatican and Indian Gazza manuscripts were consulted in the original, and the others either in microfilm or in photocopies.

1. *Brit. Mus Or. 4399 (1488 / 89 A. D)*³⁴ = Ms L

Gazza for the entire year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham (see fol. lv). The office for the feast of the Nativity is given on fol. lv-53r.

2. *Berlin Or. fol. 620 (1537 A.D)*³⁵ = Ms M

Gazza for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham (see fol. 446r). The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. lv-42v.

3. *Brit. Mus. Add. 7178 (1544 / 45 A. D)*³⁶ = Ms N

Gazza for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. lv-39v.

4. *Vat. Syr. 590 (16th century)*³⁷ = Ms O

Gazza for the whole year. About 40 pages are missing at the beginning of this manuscript, and therefore a major portion of the office for the feast of the Nativity is not found. What remains of it is found on fol. 2r-12r.

5. *Mingana Syriac 542 (1601 A D)*³⁸ = Ms P

Gazza for the entire year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The manuscript is dated on fol. 374v. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. lv-38r.

34. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2, identifies this Ms as a Gazza but gives no description of it. It does not appear in any of the published catalogues of the Syriac Mss of British Museum. Perhaps it was too recently acquired to be included in any of the published catalogues, as is the case with other manuscripts of this group; cf. MACOBER, *Hudra*, 126, N. 14 and n. 7.

35. Described in SACHAU, *Handschriften*, 159-163; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

36. Described in ROSEN-FORSHALL *Catalogus* I, 56-57. HATCH, *An Album*, 232, n. 3, says that the copyist of this Ms is not the deacon Hormizda, as given by Rosen-Forshall, but the Priest Atiyeh ibn Faraj. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 198, n. 9, mistakenly indicates this Ms as a Hudra.

37. Described in LANTSCHOOT *Inventaire*, 116-117. See Appendix III below.

38. Described in MINGANA, *Catalogue* I, 995-999.

6. *Houghton Syriac 142* (1666 A. D)³⁹ = Ms Q

Gazza for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham (see fol. 2v). The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 2v-73v.

7. *Vat. Borg. Syr. 60* (1688 A. D)⁴⁰ = Ms R

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The Ms is dated on fol. 322r. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. lv-54v.⁴¹

8. *Vat. Brog. Syr. 86* (17th century ?)⁴² = Ms S

Gazza for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. Some leaves at the beginning with, undoubtedly, part of the office for the feast of the Nativity are missing. The nature and content of this Ms seem to suggest that it is of the same epoch as that of other 17th century Mss of the Gazza under study. This Ms is only the first volume of the Gazza. The office for the feast of the nativity beginning with the 'Oniata d-Mawtba, is on fol. 2v-52v.

9. *Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 14* (1707 A. D)⁴³ = Ms T

Gazza for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 17r-33v.

39. Described in GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *A Catalogue*, 96; this was formerly Clemons 17, cf. CLEMONS, *Checklist*, 234; also the communications on the Harvard Semitic Museum by LYON, *JAOS* 15 (1893), ci.

40. This Ms was first identified as a Gazza by SAUGET, *Un cas tres curieux*, 17, n. 71-72. Previously its actual contents were unknown: cf BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte* 304, n. 2; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, xix-xx. The reason why this Ms escaped the attention of liturgical scholars is the misleading description in SCHER, *Borgia*, 264-265, where it is referred to as an Arabic Ms of the 'Testament of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, addressed to the disciples after the resurrection....'. What Scher gives as the contents of Ms *Vat. Borg. Syr. 60* is actually that of the Ms *Borgia Arab* 22, described in TISSERANT, *Inventaire*, 11. In spite of the fact that it is a catalogued Ms of the Vatican Library, presumably at the disposition of legitimate researchers, Msgr Sauget permitted me to see this Ms very briefly, nor were my repeated requests to obtain a photocopy honoured.

41. See the description of this Ms in the Appendix, n. IV

42. Described in SCHER, *Borgia*, 269; BAUMSTARK; *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2.

43. Described in APREM, *Trichur*, 358-359; VAN DER PLOEG, *Syriac Manuscripts*, 136, N. 6.

10. *Camb. Add. 1980 (1723 A. D)*⁴⁴ = Ms U

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham (see fol. 2v). The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 2v-56r.

11. *Berlin Or. fol. 3181 (1778 A. D)*⁴⁵ = Ms V

Gazza for the feasts and commemorations for the whole year according to the use of the Upper Monastery of Mar Gabriel and Mar Abraham, in a recension made by the Catholic Chaldeans. The first eleven folios are missing. The office for the feast of the Nativity is on fol. 12v-23r.

III. The Structure of the Office for the Feast of the Nativity in Bedjan Compared with Darmo and the Manuscripts

In the following table we compare the text of Bedjan with that of 11 Hudra manuscripts (81 – 84 above), 11 Gazza manuscripts (90-92 above) and the text of Darmo for the office of the feast of the Nativity. The serial numbers in the table correspond to the hymns and rubrics found in the manuscripts, while the numeration of Bedjan corresponds to the numbering of the hymns and rubrics given in our translation of the text above in chapter two. The page numbers in the table correspond to those in Bedjan.

The manuscripts of the Hudra and Gazza are grouped in these two categories in order to show at a glance the contents proper to each book. Within each category the Mss are arranged in chronological order, as follows:

Hudra Manuscripts

- Ms A = Brit. Mus. Add. 7177 (1484 A. D)
 Ms B = Vat. Borg. Syr. 150 (15th century)
 Ms C = Vat. Syr. 83 (1538 A. D)
 Ms D = Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 25 (1598 A. D)
 Ms E = Vat. Syr. 86 (16th century)
 Ms F = Camb. Add. 1981 (1607 A. D)
 Ms G = Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 27 (1681 A. D)

44. Described in WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue* I, 147-163; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, xix and 9.

45. ASSFALG, *Syr. Handschriften*, 63-65; BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 304, n. 2, calls this Ms Orqu 1161 (1781).

- Ms H = Berlin Or. Quarto 1160 (1686 A. D)
 Ms I = Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 21
 (16th/17th century)
 Ms J = Vat. Syr. 574 (1721 A. D)
 Ms K = Athens: National Library 1802 (1724 A. D)

Gazza Manuscripts

- Ms L = Brit. Mus. or. 4399 (1488/89 A. D)
 Ms M = Berlin Or. fol. 620 (1537 A. D)
 Ms N = Brit. Mus. Add. 7178 (1544/ 45 A. D)
 Ms O = Vat. Syr. 590 (16th century)
 Ms P = Mingana Syriac 542 (1601 A. D)
 Ms Q = Houghton Syriac 142 (1666 A. D)
 Ms R = Vat. Borg. Syr. 60 (1688 A. D)
 Ms S = Vat. Borg. Syr. 86 17th century ?
 Ms T = Trichur: Chaldean Syr. Metropolitan's Library, Ms 14
 (1707 A. D)
 Ms U = Camb. Add. 1980 (1723 A. D)
 Ms V = Berlin Or. fol. 3181 (1778 A. D)

Abbreviations and sigla in the Table and apparatus

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| SL NO | = | Serial Number |
| BED | = | BEDJAN, Breviarium, vol. I |
| DAR | = | DARMO, Breviarium, vol. I |
| ≠ | = | Same in Bedjan |
| X | = | Different from Bedjan |
| (-), (+), (.), (x) | = | Different from Bedjān, but same in the manuscripts |
| O | = | Damaged |
| * | = | See the apparatus at the bottom of the page |
| = | = | Transference |
| Apx | = | Appendix |

To facilitate easy reference, we give side by side in the Table each piece, in the order in which it appears in the structure of the offices, of the entire proper for the feast of the Nativity, and the comparison of it in Darmo and the manuscripts. The blank spaces in the Table indicate the absence of the relative piece. Since all Hudra manuscripts refer the user to the Gazza for the 'Oniātā d-Mawtbā, these 'oniātā are not found in the Hudra. Bedjan does not give in the office the Scripture lessons for the feast of the Nativity, as they are not part of the hours, but belong to the Eucharist. Therefore we omit from the Table of Comparison the Scripture lessons found in Darmo and the manuscripts. They will be dealt with later.

TABLE I Numbering of the Chants and Rubrics for the Office
of the Feast of the Nativity in Bedjan and the
Comparison with Darmo and the Manuscripts.

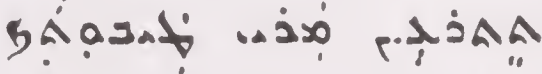
SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE
1	1	Title and Rubrics	320
2	2	Marmitā, see 281*	
3	3	A(i)k 'Etrā	
4	4	Šabbah	
5	5	Laku Mārā	
6	6	Šabbah	
7	7	Ālam	
8	8	Šlotā	
9	9	Onitā d-Qdam	321
10	10	Šabbah	
11	11	Māryā Qretāk: Qānōnā	
12	12	b-Qāl 1-Māryā: Qānōnā	322
13	13	Šrāgā hi Meltāk: Qānōnā	
14	14	Šabbah 1-Māryā: Qānōnā	
15	15	Šabbah: Qānōnā	323
16	16	Ālam: Qānōnā	

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
1	1	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
2	2	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
3	3	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
4	4	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#			#	#		#	#	#
5	5	#			#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#			#	#		#	#	
6	6	#		#		#		#	#		#			#		#			#	#		#	#	
7	7	#		#		#		#	#		#			#		#			#	#		#	#	
8	8	#		#					#															
9	9	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
10	10	#		#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#	#	#
11	11	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
12	12	#	Q*	#	#	#	Q	#	#		#	#	#	Q	#	#		#	Q	#		#	#	#
13	13	#	Q*	#	#	#	Q	#	#	#	#	#	#	Q	#	#		#	Q	#		#	#	#
14	14	#	#	#	Q*	#	Q	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
15	15	#	λ*	#		λ*		#	#		#	#		#		#			#			#	#	#
16	16	#	#	#		λ*		#	#		#	#		Q*		#			Q			#	#	#

DAR. 4: Adds ‘alam. MssADGIJLNQV, 3: Incipits only. MsA, 12=BED. 13; 13=BED. 12; 15: ١٥.١٦ ١٧.١٨ ١٩.٢٠ ; 16: no refrain. MssCHKM, 5: Title only; MsC, 14=BED. 15. MsD, 15=BED. 16; 16=MsA, 16. MsG, 4: incipit only. MssHKMPT, 3: Rubrics only. MssIT, 5: incipits only MsL, 16=BED. 15.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE
17	17	Şlotî ܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܥܡܐܢ ܕܡܐ	
18	18	Onitā d-Bāṭar ܕܗܝܬܐ ܕܡܕܢ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ ܕܡܕܢ	
19	19	Šabbah ܡܫܬܐ ܕܫܒ	
20	20	Kārōzūtā, see 341* ܡܡܝܕܐ ܕܡܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
21	21	Qa ⁿ dqišā Allāhā ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܠܐܗܐ	
22	22	Suyyākē, see 216* ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
23	23	" see 218* ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
24	24	Şlotā, see 12 ܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
25	25	Šurrāyā, see 281* ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
26	26	Şlotā d-Bāsāliqē ܠܗܘܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
27a	27a	Oniātā d-Bāsāliqē 1 ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	32
27b		" "	
28a	28a	" " 2 ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	
28b		" "	
28c		" "	
29	29	" " 3 ܡܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܡܝܕܐ	


			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
17	17	#		#					#															
18	18	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	⊖		#	#	#
19	19	#				#	#						#											
20	20	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#	#	#
21	21	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#			#	#		⊖	#	#
22	22	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		⊖	#	#		#	#	#
23	23	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		⊖	#	#
24	24	#				#		#	#		#	#		#		#			#	#		#	#	#
25	25	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		⊖	⊖	#
26	26	⊖*		⊖				⊖	⊖		#		#	⊖*		#			⊖	⊖		#	#	#
27a	27a	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
27b		⊖*	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖
28a	28a	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
28b		⊖*	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖
28c		⊖*		⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖			⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖		⊖	⊖	⊖*
29	29	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	⊖*	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#

DAR. 26: see Apx. I:1; 27b: see Apx. I:2; 28b: see Apx. I:3; 28c: see Apx. I:4. MsL, 26 :  (incipit only). MsK, 29=SL NO 28b. MsV, 28c: see Apx. I:4.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E		PAGE	
30	30	Oniṣṭā d-Bāsāliqē	4.	ܚܒܝܢ ܐܢܝܫܝܢ ܕܕܡܝܕ	
31	32	"	5	ܚܠܩܐ ܕܠܐ ܠܚܕܐ	
32	32	"	6.	ܡܬܢܐ ܝܥܡܝܕ ܒܡܠܟܐ	
33	33	"	7.	ܚܝܬܐ ܕܠܝܩܐ	
34	34	"	8.	ܒܝܬܐ ܕܝܫܬܐ	325
35	35	"	9.	ܬܒܠܬܐ ܕܕܡܝܕ	
36	36	"	10.	ܩܢܬܐ ܕܒܝܬܐ ܕܝܒ ܕܡ	
37	37	"	11.	ܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܬܐ	
38a	38a	"	12.	ܕܡܝܢ ܠܚܕܐ ܕܡܝܕ	
38b					
39a					
39b	39b	" d-Ṣlotā		ܕܝܠܬܐ ܕܡܝܕ ܕܕܡܝܕܐ	
40	40	" "		ܡܬܢܐ ܡܝܬܐ	
41	41	" "		ܡܬܢܐ ܡܝܬܐ	
42	42	Rubrics on the celebration of Mass			
43	43	d-Bēm		ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ	

MsA, 30=SL NO 28b; 31=BED. 30; 32=BED. 31; 33=BED. 34; 34=BED. 32; 35=BED, 33; 42: ܡܬܢܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ .
MsC, 31=BED. 32; 32=BED. 31; 33=BED. 30; 36=BED 35; 37=BED. 36; 38a: see Apx. I:5; 38b: see Apx. I:6; 39b: ܡܬܢܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ “(incipit only); MssCDFHKLMPQR, 42: ܡܬܢܐ ܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ MsD, 32=BED. 34; 33=BED. 32; 34=BED. 33; 35: BED. 36; 36=MsC, 38a. ./.

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS											
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V	
30	30	#	Θ*	#	Θ	#	#	#	#	#	#		X*	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	
31	32	#	X*	#	Θ*	#	#	#	#	Θ	#		#	#	Θ	#		Θ	#	#		#	#	#	
32	32	#	X*	#	Θ*	Θ*	Θ	#	#	Θ	#		#	Θ	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	#		#	#	#	
33	33	#	Θ*	#	X*	Θ*	Θ	#	#	Θ	#		#	Θ	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	#		#	#	#	
34	34	#	X*	#	#	Θ*	Θ	#	#	Θ	#		#	Θ	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	#		#	#	#	
35	35	#	Θ*	#	Θ	Θ*			#	Θ	#		X*	Θ*	Θ	#			Θ	#		#	#	#	
35	36	#		#	X*	X*			#		#		#			#				#		#	#	#	
37	37	#		#	X*	#		Θ*	#	Θ	#		X*		Θ	#		Θ		#		#	#	#	
38a	38a	#		#	Θ*	Θ			#		#				X*	#				#		#	#	#	
38b					X*																				
39a								Θ*						Θ					Θ						
39b	39b	#		#	Θ*	Θ		Θ*	#	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	Θ			Θ	Θ	Θ		#	#	#	
40	40	#		#				Θ*	#	Θ*	#			Θ	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	Θ		#	#	#	
41	41	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	
42	42	#	X*	#	#*	#*		#*	#	#*	#	#	#*	#*	#*	#		#*	#*	#*			#		
43	43	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		

./ MsF, 37=SL NO 38b; 39a=MsC, 39b; 39b=  (incipit only); 40=BED. 39b. MsH, 40=BED. 39b. MsK, 30=BED. 29; 35=BED. 30; 37: see Apx. I:7. MsL, 35=MsC, 38b. MsM, 38a=MsK, 37.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E		PAGE	
44a	44a	d-Bēm : Bātē	فَتَحْنَا. نَرْفَعُ دِهْ جِهْ جِهْ جِهْ	326	
44b	44b	" "	لَا تَذْخُلْ خَلْقًا يَدَا لِهْ		
45	45	Tešboḥtā see 349*	دِهْ دِهْ دِهْ. لَذْمَا جِهْ جِهْ		
46	46	Rubrics on the celebration of Mass			
47a	47a	Lelya· (4 Hullale, see 278*)	لَعْلَا جِهْ		
47b					
48*	48	MAWTBĀ: ʿoniṭā 1.	كَهْ دِهْ جِهْ. وَتَا بَحْبَقَا يَلْتَا		
49	49	" " 2.	بَلْجْ دِهْ جِهْ. لَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ		
50	50	" " 3.	لَحْبَقَا بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ	327	
51	51	" " 4.	لَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ		
52	52	" " 5.	دِهْ جِهْ دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ	328	
53	53	" " 6.	دِهْ جِهْ دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ		
54	54	" " 7.	دِهْ جِهْ دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ	329	
55	55	" " 8.	جِهْ جِهْ دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ		
56	56	" " 9.	دِهْ جِهْ دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ		
57	57	" " 10.	لَذْمَا دِهْ جِهْ. بَحْبَقَا دِهْ جِهْ		

SL NO 48-78 (‘Oniātā d-Mawtbā) are omitted in all the Hudra manuscripts under study and they are generally referred to Gazza.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E		PAGE	
58	58	MAWTBĀ: ʿonitā	11.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
59	59	" "	12.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
60	60	" "	13.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	330
61	61	" "	14.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
62	62	" "	15.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
63	63	" "	16.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
64	64	" "	17.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	331
65	65	" "	18.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
66	66	" "	19.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
67	67	" "	20.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	332
68	68	" "	21.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
69	69	" "	22.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
70	70	" "	23.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	333
71	71	" "	24.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
72	72	" "	25.	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	
73	73	" "	d-Šlotā 1	ܡܠܬܐ ܕܝܫܥ ܕܡܪܝܡ	

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
58	58	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	
59	59	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	
60	60	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	
61	61	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#
62	62	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#
63	63	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	
64	64	#												#	#	#		#		#	#		#	
65	65	#													#	#		#	#	#	#		#	
66	66	#												#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#
67	67	#												#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
68	68	#													#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#
69	69	#													#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#
70	70	#													#	#		#	#		#	#		#
71	71	#													#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	
72	72	#														#		#	#	#			#	
73	73	#														#								#

SL NO	BED	T I T L E		PAGE	
74	74	MAWTBĀ. ʿOnīṭā d-Šloṭā	2		ܓܥܕܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܠܡܨܝܚ
75	75	" "	3.	334	ܠܟܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢܐ
76	76	" "	4.		ܕܝܠܥܝܕ ܠܚܝܩܐ ܡܕܢܝܢܐ
77	77	" " d-fannidē	1.		ܕܝܠܥܝܕܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
78	78	" "	2.		ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
79a	79a	Šabbah			ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
79b					
80	80	Qānōnā see 288*		337	ܕܗ ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
81	81	'			ܠܟܝܢ ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
82	82	" see 330*			ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
83	83				ܕܗ ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
84a	84a	Tešboṇṭā see 47			ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
84b					
85	85	Kārōzūṭā see 345*			ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
86	86	MADRĀŠĀ. ʿUnnāya			ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ
87	87	" Bātē			ܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܝܢܐ

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
74	74	#														#						#		#
75	75	#																				#		#
76	76	#																				#		#
77	77	#																				#		#
78	78	#																				#		#
79a	79a	X*													Θ*	Θ	#	Θ	Θ	#	Θ	#	Θ	#
79b		Θ*													Θ	Θ		Θ	Θ		Θ		Θ	
80	80	#	#			Θ*		#					Θ	#	#	Θ	#		#	#	#	#	#	#
81	81	#	#			#		#					#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#
82	82	#	#			Θ*		#					Θ	#	#	Θ	#		#	#	#	#	#	#
83	83	#	#			#		#					#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#
84a	84a	#	#					#			#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
84b			Θ*			Θ				Θ					Θ			Θ					Θ	
85	85	#	#	Θ*		Θ			Θ		Θ		#		Θ	#	#	Θ		#	#		#	#
86	86	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	#			#		#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#
87	87	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	#			#		#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#

DAR. 79a: see Apx I:9; 79b=BED. 79a with $\pi-\lambda\lambda$
MsA, 84b=see Apx. I:9. MsB, 85 = $\lambda\lambda$ $\lambda\lambda$ (incipit only).
MsD, 80=BED. 82; 82=BED. 80. MsM, 79a: see Apx. I:10.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
88	88	MADRĀŠĀ. Another: ʿUnnāyā	338	
89a	89a	" " Bātē		
89b*				
89c*				
90	90	Ṣlotā		
91	91	Qānōnā see 332*		
92	92	" see 333*		
93	93	Ṣlotā		
94	94	(Mazmorā) see 334*		
95	95	And they pray	339	
96	96	Qānōnē:		
97	97	"		
98	98	"		
99	99	"		
100	100	"		
101	101	"		

SL NO. 89b: See Apx I, n. 11. SL NO. 89c: See Apx I, n. 12. There we have given the Madrāse in different manuscripts, but not found in Bedjan's office for the feast of the Nativity.

			HUORA MANUSCRIPTS											CAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
88	88	#	#	#				#	#		#		#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
89a	89a	#	#	#				#	#		#		#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
89b																								
89c																								
90	90	#																						
91	91	#	#					#	#		#	#				#	#			#		#	#	#
92	92	#	#					#	#		#	#				#	#			#	#	#	#	#
93	93	#																						
94	94	#		#				#	#		#	#				#	#			#		#	#	#
95	95	#																						
96	96	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
97	97	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#
98	98	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#
99	99	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#
100	100	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#
101	101	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#

MssLQ, 96: only “they say the third Mawṭbā.”

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
102	102	Qānōnē. تدمع ذکا هتکلیما		
103	103	" تدمع ملکا تادیهما		
104	104	" تدمع جیسه هم ذهها		
105	105	" تدمع جیما هم یو د	340	
106	106	" تدمع همما تسمهههه		
107	107	" تدمع همما هتتد عل		
108	108	" تدمع ههه نههههه		
109	109	" تدمع ههه دههههه		
110	110	" تدمع ههه دههههههه		
111	111	" تدمع دهههه هههه دههه		
112	112	" تدمع دهههه دههههههه		
113	113	" تدمع دهه دهه دههه		
114	114	" دهههه دهه دهههههه		
115	115	" دهههه دهه دههههه		
116	116	" ده دهههه دهههههه		
117	117	تدمع ههه دههههههه	341	

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
118	118	Qānōnē: تَذْبِيحُ هَذَا ذَبْحُ مَدْحٍ		
119	119	" تَذْبِيحُ ذَبْحِيذٍ يَدْبَحُ		
120	120	" دَبْحَمَدٍ تَهْمَتُهُو		
121	121	" هَجِيذُ مَلَدُو فَسْتَبِ		
122	122	" سَوَهْ اَجَمَدُ دِيْنَا لَنَا		
123	123	" يَهْدَسَمُ هَذَمُ يَتَبْنِي		
124	124	" مَلِيكُ هَذَمُ اِهْ لَكَبَم		
125	125	" مَجَلُ هَذَمُ تَدَهْدَهْ		
126	126	" نَهْمَتُهُو مَلَمُ نَعْفَدُ		
127	127	" فَكَمُ اِدْعِي تَذَهْبِ		
128	128	" جَبُ مَضَمُ حَلُ تَهْدَدُ		
129	129	" اَمَدُ لَمَدَا دَدِ اَجْمَتَهْ	342	
130	130	تَذْبِيحُ دَبْحَمِ تَهْمَتُهُو		
131	131	تَدْمَجُ مَلَدَا دِيْنَا		
132	132	Šabbah شَبَّاسُ هَلَا دِيذْبَحُ مَدَهْجَا		
133	133	Ālam اَلَامُ دَاوَمَدُ مَدَهْجَا لَهْدَا		

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
118	118	#	#	#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
119	119	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
120	120	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
121	121	#	#	#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
122	122	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
123	123	#		#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
124	124	#		#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
125	125	#	#	#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
126	126	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
127	127	#	#	#	#			#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
128	128	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
129	129	#	#	#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
130	130	#	#	#	#			#	#	#	#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
131	131	#	χ ²	#	#			#	#		#	#			#	#		#		#		#	#	#
132	132	#	χ ²	#	#	Θ ²	χ ²	#	#	χ ²	#	#	Θ		#	#		#		#		#	#	#
133	133	#	χ ²	#	#	Θ ²	χ ²	#	#	χ ²	#	#	Θ		#	#		#		#		#	#	#

MsA, 132-133=BED- 97 with sabbah and ‘alam. MsD, 132=BED. 124; 133=BED. 123. MsE, 132=BED. 123; 133=BED. 97. MsH, 132=BED. 131; 133=BED. 132 (omits sabbah and ‘alam). MsA, 131: see Apx. I:13.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
134	134	And they respond: Halleluia הַלְלוּמֶנֶה הַלְלוּמֶנֶה הַלְלוּמֶנֶה		
135	135	.QĀLE d-ŠAHRĀ: see 217* (Mazmora) לְחַנְּנָא דְכִיבֵה		
136	136	see 267* " בְּלִיָּה הָאֵת בִּינְעִי		
137	137	see 304* " לִיבְדָא חֲנֻנָא לְחֻנְנָא		
138	138	Rubrics of Mazmora: they kneel between psalms. חֲנֻנִיָּם תְּהֻנְנָא even when feast falls on Sunday.		
139	139	d-Lelva דְּלִילְוָא . מְדִיָּה מְדִיָּה בִּיבְדִיָּה		
140	140	Šabbah בְּחַס חַתָּה		
141	141	And they pray. וְהִמְלִיָּם . לֵךְ קְדָמָה		
142	142	And they begin: הָאֵת קְדָמָא תְּקַדְּבִיָּנָא		
143	143	Šabbān בְּחַס חַתָּה		
144	144	And they pray. תְּתַפְּלִיָּם בְּחַס חַתָּה		
145	145	And they begin: חַס חַס לְהִתְבַּדְּדִי		
146	146	Šabbah בְּחַס . מְלִיָּה חַתָּה חַלְקָא		
147	147	Ālam חַלְקָא . מְדִיָּה בְּיָדָא יְעִיָּה	344	
148	148	Nēmar יָמָד . מְחַסָּא לָא דְחַסָּא		
149	149	And they pray: וְהִמְלִיָּם . יְעִיָּה לֵךְ חַסָּא		

		HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS												GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS											
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V	
134	134	#		#				#	#		#	#				#		X*		#		#	#	#	
135	135	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
136	136	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
137	137	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
138	138	#	Q	#	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	L	Q	Q	#	Q	Q	#	Q	Q	Q	Q	#	Q	
139	139	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
140	140	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
141	141	#	#	#	Y	#	Q	#	#	#	Q	#	Q	#	Q	#		Q	Q	#	#	#	#	#	
142	142	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
143	143	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
144	144	#	Q	#	Q	Q	Q	#	#	Q	#	#	Q	#	Q	#		Q	#	#	#	#	#	#	
145	145	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
146	146	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
147	147	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
148	148	Q	#	Q	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
149	149	#	Q	#	#	Q		Q	#	Q	#	Q	#	Q		#			Q	Q	Q				

DAR. 148= see Apx. I:14. MsA, 138= "If the feast does not fall on a Sunday;" 144: ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܬܐ (incipit only); 149: ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܬܐ (incipit only). MsC, 141=BED. 26; 144: see Apx. I:15. MsE, 141: ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܬܐ (incipit only); 144: MsA, 149. MsH, 141=MsA, 149. MsM, 144: ܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܬܐ (incipit only). MsP, 134: see Apx. I:16.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
150	150	Qānōnā	میدید بکتیا	
151	151	"	هم بدیشا پلديه	
152	152	"	دهدنيا تهذهيا بکتيا	
153	153	"	ددا متبشا دمهضنا	
154a	154a	Šabbah (1)	خفيس. تهذهيا بکتيا	
154b	154b	" (2)	دکله تدهو، ضنصيد.	
155	155	And they continue (three times)	دتههستيا لکله تهذهيا	345
156	156	Hpāktā	تفجنه: بيه لمدنه	
157	157	Kārōzūtā	متبشا ديزمليد عههضنا	
158	158	"	متبشا ديزمليد وچنلله	
159	159	"	متبشا ملکا لمبشا	
160	160	"	تتبشا هديک ددهيد	
161	161	"	متبشا ديزمليد مهضنا	
162	162	"	متبشا ديهنا ددبههخا	
163	163	"	تتبشا دجهکديک دتههخا	
164	164	"	متبشا دجهکديک هديتا	

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS											
SL NO	BED	DAK	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V	
150	150	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
151	151	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
152	152	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
153	153	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
154a	154a	#	#	#					#	X*	#	#	U*	U	U	#		U	U	#	U	#	#	#	
154b	154b	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	U*	U	U	#		U	U	#	U	#	#	#	
155	155	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	
156	156	#		#					#		#	#				#				#		#	#	#	
157	157	#	U*	#	U	U*	U*	#	#	U	#	U	U	#	U	#		U	#	#	#	#	#	#	
158	158	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	
159	159	#		#					#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	
160	160	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	
161	161	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	
162	162	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	
163	163	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	
164	164	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#	

MsA. 157: see Apx. I:17. MsD, 157: see Apx. I:18. MsE, 157: **١-٥٢ ٥٣-٥٤** (incipit only). MsH, 154a: see Apx. I:19. MsK, 154a=BED. 154b; 154b: see Apx. I:20.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
165	165	Kārōzūtā ܡܬܢܐ ܕܝܚܝܬܐ ܕܝܥܝܪ ܕܕܢܐ ܡܠܐ		
166	166	" ܡܬܢܐ ܐܕܪ ܡܢܢܐ		
167	167	" ܥܠ ܡܢܐ ܡܕܡܠܐܡܐ		
168	168	" ܥܠ ܡܢܢܐ ܡܢܝܚܐܡܐ	346	
169	169	" ܥܠ ܐܝܡܡܐ ܡܢܝܚܐܡܐ		
170	170	" ܥܠ ܡܢܢܐ		
171a	171a	" ܐܠܥܐ ܡܢܢܐ		
171b		"		
171c		"		
172	172	" ܡܬܢܐ ܕܥܕ ܐܕܡܐ		
173	173	" ܡܬܢܐ ܥܡܐ ܕܝܠܕܐ		
174	174	Šloṭā ܡܠܡܐ . ܕܡܠܟܐ ܠܡܢܐ		
175	175	" Another ܕܡܠܡܐ ܡܢܢܐ ܡܢܢܐ	347	
176	176	Šabbah ܡܬܢܐ . ܡܬܢܐ ܕܡܠܐ ܡܢܢܐ	349	
177a	177a	Another ܡܬܢܐ ܡܢܢܐ ܡܢܢܐ		
177b				

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
165	165	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
166	166	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
167	167	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
168	168	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
169	169	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
170	170	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#		#	
171a	171a	#	Θ*	#	Θ	Θ		#	#	Χ*	#		Θ	#	Θ	#		Θ	#	#	#	#	#	
171b			Θ*		Θ	Θ							Θ											
171c			Θ*		Θ	Θ*				Θ			Θ		Θ									
172	172	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
173	173	#		#				#	#		#			#		#			#	#	#	#	#	#
174	174	#	#		#	#			#	#	#			#		#			#			#	#	#
175	175	#	#		#	#			#	#	#			#		#						#	#	#
176	176	#	#	#	#	Θ	#	#	#	Θ	#	#	#	Θ	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	#	Θ	#	#	#
177a	177a	#	#	#	#	Θ		#	#	Θ	#		#	Θ	Θ	#		Θ	Θ	#	Θ	#	#	#
177b										Υ														

MsA, 171a : see Apx. I:21; 171b: see Apx. I:22. 17c : see Apx. I:23. MsD, 171c: see Apx. I:24. MssDGINTV, 174 & 175: “they say two suitable prayers.” D, 176=BED. 177a; 177a=BED. 176; MsH, 171a: see Apx. I:25. MsH, 177b: see Apx. I:26.

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
178	178	ܡܬܬܬܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ		
179	179	ܡܬܬܬܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ		
180	180	ܡܬܬܬܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܢܐ		
181	181	d-ŞAPRA Sonitā 1.		
182	182	" " 2		
183	183	" " 3.		
184	184	" " 4.		
185	185	" " 5	350	
186	186	" " 6.		
187	187	" " 7.		
188	188	" " 8.		
189	189	" " 9		
190	190	Şabbah with the first.		
191a	191a	Şalam 10.		
191b				
192	192	And they continue		

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS												GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS											
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V		
178	178	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#		
179	179	#		#*		#		#*	#		#	#*				#		#	#*		#	#	#	#		
180	180	#	#	#		#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#		
181	181	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#		
182	182	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#		
183	183	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
184	184	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
185	185	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
186	186	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
187	187	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
188	188	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
189	189	#	θ*	#	θ	#	#	#	#	θ	#		#	θ	θ	#		θ	θ	#	θ	#	#			
190	190	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	X*	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
191a	191a	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#			
191b										θ*			θ													
192	192																	θ*		θ						

MsA, 189: see Apx. I:27. MssBFJR, 179: omit 'alam. MsJ, 190=MsA, 189. MsH, 191b=see Apx. I:28. MsQ, 192: $\text{١ ٢ ٣ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧ ٨ ٩ ١٠ ١١ ١٢ ١٣ ١٤ ١٥ ١٦ ١٧ ١٨ ١٩ ٢٠ ٢١ ٢٢ ٢٣ ٢٤ ٢٥ ٢٦ ٢٧ ٢٨ ٢٩ ٣٠}$ (incipit only).

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
193a	193a	d-Bārek		دەروە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
193b				
193c				
194a	194a	da-Lbāktā		دەلەبەتە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
194b				
195	195	Tešbohtā		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
196	196	Qa ⁿ ḡdīša Allāhā	351	ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
197	197	Marmītā d-Rāzē: see 289* {until Lent. except commemorations}		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
198	198	Aqqaptā: see 239* (on all dominical feasts)		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
199	199	d-Qānkē		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
200	200	Šabbah		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
201	201	Šurrāyā		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
202	202	Punnāyā		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
203	203	Šabbah		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
204	204	Zummārā		ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە
205	205	d-Rāzē	352	ھەبەرە ھەبەرە ھەبەرە

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS										
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V
193a	193a	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
193b					Q*	Q				Q			Q		Q			Q						
193c					Q*	Q				Q			Q											
194a	194a	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#		#		#	#		#		#			#	
194b		Q*				X*		X*	Q	X*	X*		Q			Q								
195	195	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#
196	196	#		#		#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#			#			#		#	#	#	#
197	197	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
198	198	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#
199	199	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		Q*	#	J
200	200	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		Q*	#	J
201	201	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#	#	#			#	
202	202	#	#		#	#		#	#		#					#			#				#	
203	203	#																						
204	204	#	#	#		#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#		#	#		#	#	#	#
205	205	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		Q*	#	J

DAR. 194b: see Apx. I:29. MsC, 193bc: see Apx. I:30. MsD. 194b: see Apx. I:31. MsF, 194b: see Apx. I:32. MsH, 194b: see Apx. I:33. MsI, 194b: see Apx. I:34. MsT, 199=BED. 72; 200: see Apx. I:35; 205: see Apx. I:36

SL NO	BED	T I T L E	PAGE	
206	206	And they say the Nicene Creed		ܐܡܢܝܢܐ
207	207	The 2nd Anaphora is to be said from Annunciation until Osanna		
208	208	Rubrics on the celebration of Mass		
209	209	And they say: D'hil-A(n)t		ܡܢܬܬܝܒ. ܒܫܒܝܠܐ
210	210	Bātē		ܚܕܐ ܠܒ ܕܝܬܐ ܒܝܬܐ
211	211	D'hil-A(n)t + Bātē		ܒܫܒܝܠܐ. ܡܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܩܬܝܐ
212	212	D'hil-A(n)t		ܒܫܒܝܠܐ
213	213	Aqqaptā		ܬܥܬܐ. ܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ
214	214	d-Bēm : Unnāyā		ܦܝܕܐ ܡܕܐ ܡܕܐ ܡܕܐ
215	215	" "		ܕܐ ܠܡܕ ܡܕܐ
216	216	Bātē		ܡܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܩܬܝܐ
217	217	" "	353	ܕܐ ܢܚܝܬܐ
218	218	" "		ܡܕܐ ܠܒ ܕܝܬܐ
219	219	And they continue: Pagraḵ va-Dmāḵ		ܡܡܝܬܐ ܦܕܕܐ ܡܕܐ
220	220	Bātē		ܡܢ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܩܬܝܐ
221	221	" "		ܕܐ ܠܡܕ ܡܕܐ

			HUDRA MANUSCRIPTS											GAZZA MANUSCRIPTS											
SL NO	BED	DAR	Ms A	Ms B	Ms C	Ms D	Ms E	Ms F	Ms G	Ms H	Ms I	Ms J	Ms K	Ms L	Ms M	Ms N	Ms O	Ms P	Ms Q	Ms R	Ms S	Ms T	Ms U	Ms V	
206	206	#		#		#		#	#	#	#	#				#				#			#		
207	207	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#	#	#	#		#			#	#			#		
208	208	#	#	#	#	#		#	#		#	#	#			#				#			#		
209	209	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
210	210	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
211	211	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
212	212	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
213	213	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
214	214	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		Θ	#	Θ	
215	215	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
216	216	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		Θ	#	Θ	
217	217	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#			#		
218	218	#		#	#	#		#	#		#				#	#		#		#			#		
219	219	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	
220	220	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	
221	221	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#		#		#	#	#	#		#	#	#		#	#	#	

MsA, 220: see Apx. I:37; 221: see Apx. I:37. MsC, 218: see Apx. I:38. MsT, 214: see Apx. I:39; 216: see Apx. I:39.

[illegible]

From the above comparison it becomes clear that Bedjan has made recourse to the manuscript tradition in preparing the text of the office for the feast of the Nativity. He has also followed the basic structure, according to the use of the Upper Monastery, that has come down through the manuscript tradition. We see, however, a few variations by way of transferences and omissions.

1. Transferences

The transferences in Bedjan, already noted by the sign “=” in the apparatus of the Table of Comparison, are nothing but a change of position of certain hymns within the same unit. For example, the ‘*oniātā d-Bāsāliqē*’ corresponding to the SL No. 27 a-38a do not follow a consistent order in all the manuscripts studied. All the same, Bedjan’s order in this instance corresponds perfectly to that of Mss BGINRTUV.

2. Omissions

It is chiefly by way of omission that Bedjan’s breviary exhibits the greatest differences from the manuscript tradition. Of the long Night Service (Lelya) a major portion is omitted. The three *Mawlbē* are fused into one by cutting short the number of the psalms and ‘oniata, whereas in the manuscripts the whole Psalter is appointed to be said at this service. Bedjan omits certain ‘oniata found in many of the Gazza manuscripts, either because they were thought tainted with “Nestorianism,” or because of the desire to limit the number of ‘oniata in the Night Office, as is the case with the numerous ‘oniata entitled *Oniātā d-Mawtbā*. Whenever a full text of any suppressed hymn is found in any of the manuscripts studied or in Darro, that text with its English translation is given in the Appendix, except those that come under the title ‘oniātā d-Mawtbā.

All the Hudra manuscripts studied refer to the Gazza for the ‘oniata d-Mawtba. These hymns, meant for the nocturnal vigil, are numerous and long, and often differ in manuscripts themselves.⁴⁶ Bedjan and Darro selected only twenty-five of

46. Although Patriarch Iso ‘Yahb III determined the norms for the cathedral office, he left the monks free to organize their night vigils according to their own customs. They, in turn, respecting the norms laid down by the Patriarch, composed new hymns and anthems. This freedom enjoyed by

them, suitable to the spirit of the office for the feast of the Nativity, from among those found in the manuscripts (see Table I, SL No. 48-72). The comparison, therefore, of this section of the 'oniātā d-Mawtbā in Bedjan with those in Darmo and the Gazza manuscripts, is restricted only to the question whether those hymns selected by Bedjan are according to the manuscript tradition. However, in order to show the diversity even among the manuscripts, we produce in an appendix the Syriac text of the first two Mawtbe from the earliest Gazza manuscript studied (Ms L, see Appendix II), and the whole text, but the shortest, from another manuscript (Ms O, see Appendix III).

Bedjan has suppressed also the following hymns found in Darmo and in the majority of the manuscripts studied:

SL NO. 27b : 'oniātā d-Bāsāliqe (See Appendix n. I : 2).

SL NO. 28b : 'oniātā d-Bāsāliqe (see Appendix n. I : 3).

SL NO. 28c : 'oniātā d-Bāsāliqe (see Appendix n. I : 4).

SL NO. 47a : Bedjan prescribes only 4 hullale, whereas the manuscripts prescribe 11 hullale.

3. Differences between Bedjan and Darmo

In fact we do not see much difference between Bedjan and Darmo in the office for the feast of the Nativity. Because of his intention to avoid "Nestorian" elements, Bedjan has omitted certain hymns which are found in Darmo. Moreover, Bedjan uses the expression "ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ" (Mother of God), while Darmo

the monks may be the reason for the multiplicity of 'oniata d-Mawtba found in the Gazza; cf. *Expositio* I, 160, para 2. See also TAFT, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 227. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 472-474, gives the French translation of the commentary by Dadiso bar Qatraya on a memra of Isaiah of Scetis (fragment of the 13th memra, Cod. Vat. Syr. 496, fol. 154v-157v), in which Dadiso speaks of the multiplicity of 'oniata, 'unnaye, qanone and hepakate which were introduced in monasteries. According to him, the singing of these long and numerous hymns, especially during the office for the feasts of our Lord, instead of promoting true ascetic life and meditation on the mysteries of God, often caused distractions, loss of time, vexation, sadness and even loss of festal joy and jubilation among the members of the community. What he advises is that the solitaries recite mainly psalms, or one 'onita.

uses “ܡܝܬܪܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ” (Mother of Christ). Such differences have been already been noted in the translation of Bedjan’s text in Chapter two.

Besides the ‘oniata corresponding to SL NO. 27b, 28b and 28c found in Darmo, but omitted by Bedjan, there are the following differences between Bedjan and Darmo:

SL NO. 26 : Sloṭā d-Bāsāliqe : Bedjan gives here a prayer different from Darmo. However, both Bedjan and Darmo have the support of the manuscripts for their particular choice, as is clear from the Table of Comparison.

SL NO. 47a : Lelya : Hullale : Bedjan limits the number of hullale to only 4, whereas Darmo, following the manuscripts, prescribes 11 hullale for the Lelya.

SL NO. 79a : Sabbah of Mawtbā d-Lelya : Darmo gives here a hymn different from Bedjan. However, here too both Bedjan and Darmo have the support of the manuscripts for their choice (see the Table of Comparison).

SL NO. 79b : Darmo, with the support of some manuscripts, gives ‘alam of Mawtbā d-Lelya with the prayer Bedjan gives for the Sabbah of Mawtbā d-Lelya (Bedjan n. 79a), whereas Bedjan, following other manuscripts, omits ‘alam (see the Table of Comparison).

SL NO. 148 : Nemar of Qālē d-Sahrā : Darmo gives a prayer different from the one in Bedjan and the manuscripts studied except for Ms B (see the Table of Comparison).

In short, we see that in preparing the text of the office for feast of the Nativity, Bedjan has been basically faithful to the manuscript tradition. The few changes by way of transferences and omissions were introduced either to eliminate all possible Nestorian expressions, or to avoid unnecessary prolongation of the service, as is the case with the suppression of many hymns like the ‘Oniātā d-Mawtbā found in the Gazza manuscripts. Thus

Bedjan has passed on to us the office for the feast of the Nativity with the age-old purity of the authentic tradition.

IV. Comparison of the Scripture Lessons in Darmo and Manuscripts

The Chaldean and Malabar Divine Office does not have lessons from Sacred Scripture and therefore Bedjan does not indicate any. We see, however, in Darmo and in many of the manuscripts studied, lessons from both the Old Testament and New Testament. But these lessons are meant for the Eucharistic Liturgy, as is evident from their position between the 'oniâtā d- Qānkē (anthems of the chancel) and d- Rāzē (anthems of the mysteries) before the anaphora, where the Liturgy of the Word of the Mass takes place.

The Scripture lessons for the Mass of the feast of the Nativity are found in only seventeen out of twenty-two manuscripts studied. Of these seventeen, except for two which give only the fourth lesson (Ms T, fol. 32; Ms V, fol. 22v), all other fifteen have four, two each from the Old and New Testaments respectively. The verses are never numbered in these manuscripts, but they give the beginning and the end of the each lesson. The chapter numberings, although the same in all seventeen manuscripts differ from the edition of the *Pešîṭta* version of the Bible⁴⁷. All four lessons found in the manuscripts are the same as those according to the use of the Upper Monastery⁴⁸. The Chaldean⁴⁹ and Malabar⁵⁰ lessons for the feast of the Nativity are in perfect agreement with Darmo and the manuscripts, as will be clear from the table below.

47. See Chapter Two, 27, n. 3.

48. *Calendarium lectionum*, 4; MACLEAN, *Offices*, 264-265; BAUMSTARK, *Perikopenordnungen*, 31. The lack of uniformity in the numbering of the verses can be seen in all three of these authors. This may be due to the oriental method of numbering the end of the lessons exclusively, i.e. giving the number of the verse that follows the last verse to be read. Besides, there are errors or misprints in all three authors; cf. MACLEAN, *Lectionary System*, 484, n. 2.

49. *Proprium Missarum*, 12-13; MOUSSES, *Livres liturgiques* 19; ALICHORAN, *Missel chaldeen*, 300.

50. *Supplementum mysteriorum*, 10-11; *Ordo celebrationis*, 43.

TABLE II. The Comparison of the Scripture Lessons

Abbreviations used in the Table

{

MsChN : Manuscript Chapter Number
DAR : Darmo
PM : Proprium Missarum
SM : Supplementum Mysteriorum
— : Absent

}

	The First Lesson	PM, 12	SM, 10	DAR. 582	MsChN
Ms A, f. 25v	Is 7:10 - 9:7				Is 4
Ms B, f. 31v	Is 7:10-16; 9:1-3, 6-7	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms C, f. 28r	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms D, f. 30r	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms E, f. 18r	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms F, f. 21v	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms G, f. 33v	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms H, f. 28r	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms I, p. 94	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms K, f. 24v	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms L, f. 52v	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms N, f. 38v	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms Q, f. 72v	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms R, f. 57r	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)
Ms U, f. 55r	" " "	"	"	"	Is 4(ㄱ); 5(ㄷ)

	The Second Lesson	PM, 13	SM, 10	DAR. 582	MsChN
Ms A, f. 25v.	Mic 4:1-3; 5:2-5, 7-9	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms B, f. 31v		"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms C, f. 28r	" " "	"	"	"	--- --- ---
Ms D, f. 30r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms E, f. 18r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms F, f. 21v-22r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms G, f. 33v	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms H, f. 28r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms I, p. 94	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms K, f. 24v	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms L, f. 52v	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms N, f. 38v	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms Q, f. 72v-73r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms R, f. 57r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)
Ms U, f. 55r	" " "	"	"	"	Mic 2 (ㄱ)

	The Third Lesson	PM, 13	SM, 10	DAR. 582	MsChN
Ms A, f. 25v	Gal 3:15 - 4:6	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms B, f. 31v	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms C, f. 28r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms D, f. 30r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms E, f. 18r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms F, f. 22r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms G, f. 33v	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms H, f. 28r*	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms I, p. 94	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms K, f. 24r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms L, f. 52v	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms N, f. 38v	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms Q, f. 73r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms R, f. 57r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)
Ms U, f. 55r	" "	"	"	"	Gal 2 (ⲓ)

* Unlike other manuscripts studied in which are found the scripture lessons, Ms H (Berlin Or. Quarto 1160, 1686 A. D), f. 28r, gives before this lesson another lesson from Rom 1:1-5 (MsChN : Rom 1 (ⲓ)) .

	The Fourth Lesson	PM, 13	SM, 11	DAR. 582	- MsChN
Ms A, f. 25v	Lk 2:1-20	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms B, f. 32r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms C, f. 28r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms D, f. 30r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms E, f. 18r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms F, f. 22r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms G, f. 33v	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms H, f. 28r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms I, p. 94	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms K, f. 24r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms L, f. 52v	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms N, f. 38v	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms Q, f. 73r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms R, f. 57r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms T, f. 32v	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms U, f. 55r	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)
Ms V, f. 22v	"	"	"	"	Lk 2 (ⲓ)

The above comparison leads to the conclusion that the Eucharistic Liturgy of the feast of the Nativity has always had four scripture lessons according to the use of the Upper Monastery, where Patriarch Išo' Yahb III's 7th century liturgical reform was normative. And these lessons have always been the following:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Is 7:10-16; 9:1.3, 6-7 | : | (“Emmanuel” = the traditional
passage of the Messianic prophecy) |
| Mic 4:1-3; 5:2-5, 7-9 | : | (The Messianic last days; Bethle-
hem, the birthplace of Messiah) |
| Gal 3:15-4:7 | : | (Born of woman; subject to the
law) |
| Lk 2:1-20 | : | (Birth of Jesus) |

The additional lesson, Rom 1:1-5, seen joined to the monastic lesson from Galatians in one Hudra manuscript (Ms *H*, fol. 28r), is here an exception. This lesson, however, is found prescribed for the feast of the Nativity in a Syriac manuscript from Malabar, *Codex Vat. Syr.* 22 (1301 A.D.)⁵¹ (fol. 4v), together with other monastic lessons from Galatians – the same monastic lesson for the feast of the Nativity – and Ephesians. *Codex Vat. Syr.* 22, which contains only lessons from pauline and deuteropauline epistles for the feasts and commemorations of the East Syrian tradition, is a copy of the text of the cathedral church of Kokhe⁵² in Seleucia Ctesiphon, prepared for the use of the Malabar Church.

The scripture lessons for the feast of the Nativity according to the lectionary system of the cathedral church of Kokhe are not substantially different from those according to the use of the Upper Monastery for the same feast, except for the absence of the first lesson and the additional lessons from the epistles in the Cathedral usage.⁵³ The third lesson, according to the Hudra Ms *H* with its additional lesson from the letter to the Romans (see

51. ASSEMANI, *Catalogue* II, 174-188; cf. also LEVI, *Ricerche*, 176-187.

52. MOUSSES, *Livres liturgiques*, 18; MACOMBER, *Lectionary System*, 488; VAN DER PLOEG, *Syriac Manuscripts*, 3-4, 72-73. For the history of this cathedral, cf. BAUMSTARK, *Eine Geschichte*, 387-389.

53. MACOMBER, *Lectionary System*, 496.

the Table II and the apparatus), agrees perfectly with the third lesson for the feast of the Nativity given in the manuscript *Leningrad Ms 621* (8th century),⁵⁴ which contains the cathedral system of epistle lessons.⁵⁵ We may, therefore, conclude that the copyist of the Hudra Ms *H* might have had before his eyes a copy of this tradition as found in the manuscript of Leningrad as he prepared the scripture lessons for the feast of the Nativity.

54. Described in FIGULEVSKAYA, *Katalog*, referred to in MACOMBER, *Lectinary System*, 484, n. 2 and 494. Cf. also FIGOULEWSKI, *Leningrad*, 215.

55. MACOMBER, *Lectinary system*, 496, n. 2 gives the third lesson for the feast of the Nativity.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICE FOR THE
FEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN THE
CHALDEAN AND MALABAR
TRADITION

We have seen in the preceding chapter the evolution of the Chaldean and Malabar office for the feast of the Nativity in the manuscript tradition. Although in the second chapter we have given the complete translation in English of the text for the office for the feast of the Nativity, we give here an analysis of the propers of *Ramsā*, *Lelya-Sapra*¹ and Mass for the same feast, to enable us to understand better the celebration of the liturgy of the birth of Christ, the Christ Event for us here and now. This we do by analysing the main constituent elements of this office, namely the psalms, hymns and the scriptural lessons, together with the signs and symbols used in this liturgical celebration. These are the real sources for a theology of the feast of the Nativity proper to these individual Churches. Indeed, such a theological synthesis is in fact the aim of our proposed analysis of the text.

I. Ramsa (Evening Prayer) of the Feast of the Nativity

The Schema of the Propers

Marmiṭā (Psalmody): One Marmiṭā (Pss 87-88)

Hymn of incense

1. For the structural analysis of the propers of the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, cf. PUDICHERY, *Ramsa*, 68-72; for that of *Lelya-Sapra*, cf. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 116-132.

Lāku Mārā

‘Oniṭā d-Qdam

Vesperal Psalms : Pss 140; 141; 118:105–112; 116 with qanone

‘Oniṭā d-Bāṭar

Kārōzūtā

Qanddisā Allāhā (Trisagion)

Suyyākē: 2 Marmiātā (Pss 1–4; 5–7)

Surrāyā: Ps 87

‘Oniṭā d-Bāsāliqe

‘Oniṭā d-Bem

Tesboḥtā

Our Father

Final Prayers

The only difference in the schema from that of a Sunday is, that there are special qanone for the Evening Psalms and two marmiātā as suyyāke. Besides, after the ‘Oniṭā d-Bāsāliqe there are also the d-Bem and tesboḥtā which pertain to the Holy Communion.

1. Marmita (Psalmody)²

Psalms are the expressions in faith of the concrete experiential encounters with the Divine made by human beings like ourselves. The basic christianizing factor in the upward movement of psalmody is that the Psalter becomes the official prayer book of the Church. The official prayer of the Church is characterized by the promise of Christ himself, “Wherever two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). Any text used officially in such prayer necessarily has to reflect the presence of Christ. It must somehow become the voice of Christ and his Church addressing the Father.

The psalms are treated in the liturgy as the Word of God to be heard, understood and prayed by the worshipping community. This is the liturgical basis for the christological interpretation of the psalms. In the early Church there was a very strong awareness of the truth that the Word who spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament is the same Word

2. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 281* – 282*; trans. n. 2.

who became incarnate in the New.³ Psalms were often interpreted in the light of the events which had occurred at the particular places and times. The psalms of Christian feasts would have been an important instance of this process.⁴ A psalm becomes entirely Christian by its use at a particular moment in the liturgy, and the choice of psalms for particular hours of the day seems to have been determined by specific references they contain rather than by their general sense, though the Christian symbolism of the hour comes in time to affect the whole psalm.⁵ If it is true that in the New Testament the unit of Christian reference is the entire psalm rather than verses with more obviously Christian applications,⁶ still even a single verse was enough to determine the liturgical orientation of a psalm.

In our Office for the feast of the Nativity, after the introductory prayers of the president,⁷ the rubrics prescribe the singing of Pss 87 and 88. These psalms are sung on all Sundays and feasts from *Subbārā* (Annunciation) to *Denḥā* (Epiphany),⁸ maybe because it is the time of the foundation of the Divine Dispensation.

Psalm 87 : This psalm is thought to describe a festal occasion in Jerusalem, when the people from all over the world are expected to be present as if the whole world is united in one faith and in one God, in their unique home.⁹ It has been very dear to Christian tradition, much loved and repeatedly celebrated.

Early Fathers of the Church like Athanasius,¹⁰ Augustine¹¹ and Jerome,¹² on the basis of verse 5: "And it has been said to

3. FISCHER, *Le Christ dans les psaumes*, 95.

4. DANIELOU, *Les psaumes dans la liturgie*, 40–56.

5. For the Christian symbolism of the hours, cf. RAFFA, *La liturgia delle ore*, 254–300.

6. DODD, *According to the Scriptures*, 58–60, 96–108.

7. The introductory prayers of *Ramsa* consist of 'Glory to God in the heights' (the angel's hymn at the birth of the Lord : Lk 2 : 14) and the Our Father. All liturgical celebrations including Mass have the same introductory prayers in the Chaldean and Malabar tradition; cf. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 2–3.

8. *Ibid.*, 53.

9. WEISER, *The Psalms*, 580.

10. *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 378.

11. *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 1202–1203.

12. *Tractatus in Librum Psalmorum*, 115, 117–118.

Sion: 'the mighty man' (Gabra Gaⁿbbara) is born in her, and he has created her',¹³ see in it an anticipation of the 'Word made flesh' of John 1:4. In verse 7 of this psalm we see an important aspect of Old Testament theology clearly expressed in a vivid scene, prefiguring the enrolment of all peoples into the family of Christ's Church. They are born anew to a heavenly citizenship (Phil 13:20; Gal 4:26; Rev 21), united in the knowledge of the Most High, drinking freely of the Springs of Life. We see also that Ps 87 speaks of the edifice of which Christ is the corner stone, throwing light on the ecclesiological interpretation dominant in the Christian tradition which sees in it the exaltation of the Church, the spiritual mother of all peoples (1 Cor 3:10; Mt 5:5; Lk 6:21),¹⁴ as in the theology of Vatican II: "The Church, 'that Jerusalem which is above', is also called 'our mother' (Gal 4:26; cf. also Rev 12:17). She is described as the spotless Lamb (Rev 19:7; 21:2; 22:17)."¹⁵ The praise of Sion¹⁵ could also be seen in the perspective of a transformed world, namely in the messianic and eschatological vision implicit in the other canticles on Sion like, for example, Isaiah 2-60. We read in St Paul: "You are no more strangers and guests, you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). Ps 87:4-6 can be seen as an anticipation of this Pauline expression.

The singing of this psalm in the context of the liturgy, therefore, inspires in us a sense of mutual belonging, creating the 'Church' here and now rendering thanks and adoration to God through anamnesis of the salvific mystery of the incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 88: This psalm is in effect a cry of suffering from the feeling of being abandoned by God. From ancient times the Church has heard in this psalm the cry of the Crucified¹⁶ and thereby ascribes the ultimate victory to the divine love. The singing of this psalm at the feast of the Nativity leads us to the

13. Cf. also ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 378.

14. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 6.

15. The expression 'Mount Sion', recurring in the Old Testament as part of Israel's theological vocabulary, designates the hill-top on which stood the special place of worship in the Jebusite city of Jerusalem; cf. NOTH, *The History of Israel*, 190.

16. ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 378-379. AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 1210-1219.

death and resurrection of Jesus. We see in one of Ephraem's *Hymns on the Nativity* an echo of the verses 4–5 of this psalm which speak of the one who was forsaken among the dead like the slain that lie among the dead:

But in your resurrection you persuade them concerning your birth; since the womb was sealed, and the sepulchre closed up; being alike pure in the womb, and living in the sepulchre. The womb and the sepulchre being sealed were witnesses unto you.¹⁷

The qanona¹⁸ of this psalm expresses our need of God's mercy in our helplessness: "You are merciful, O our Fashioner, in your loving kindness, have pity on us."¹⁹

2. Lucernarium and Incensation (A(i)k 'Etra)²⁰

The evening Office has long been associated with the ritual of the lighting of the lamps and the burning of incense. The evening offering of incense dates to Old Testament times (Exod 30:7–8).²¹ For the Christians of the early Church, the evening lamp was a symbol of Christ, the Light of the world. The earliest account of the Christian lucernarium is found in the *Apostolic Tradition* XXV of Hyppolitus of Rome (ca 215):

When the bishop is present, and evening has come, a deacon brings in a lamp; and standing in the midst of all the faithful who are present, (the bishop) shall give thanks... And he shall pray thus saying: We give you thanks, Lord, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom you have shown upon us and revealed to us the inextinguishable light. So when we have completed the length

17. HNat. X, 6; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 67; ET adapted from NPNF (second series), XIII, 241.

18. The qanone (or giyyore – strangers – as they are called by the Chaldeans) are refrains that accompany each psalm and are inserted in red after the first or second petgama (verse) of every psalm. Abdiso of Nisibe attributes the composition of these qanone to Catholicos Mar Aba (A. D. 536–552); ASSEMANI, BO III, 1, 76; cf. VOSTE, *Sur les titres*, 221, n. 6; MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 30–31, 315. Mateos, pp. 316–338, gives the French translation of all these qanone. In Bedjan's *Breviarium* they are found on pp. 216* – 335* in all the three volumes.

19. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 282.*

20. *Ibid.*, 320; trans. n. 3.

21. On the history of the use of incense in Worship, cf. ATCHLEY, *Incense*.

of the day and have satisfied ourselves with the light of the day which you have created for our satisfying; and since now through your grace we do lack the light of evening, we praise and glorify you through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom be glory and power and honour to you with the Holy Spirit, both now and always and to the ages of ages. Amen.²²

We have from the pilgrim-nun Egeria another description of such a ceremony, this time in Jerusalem:

...at four o'clock they have *Lychnicon*, as they call it, or in our language, Lucernare. All the people congregate once more in the Anastasis, and the lamps and candles are all lit, which makes it very bright. The fire is brought not from outside, but from the cave—inside the screen where a lamp is always burning night and day (24.4).²³

Although there is no mention of a ritual like lamp lighting in our Evening Office for the feast of the Nativity, the Lucernarium and the incensing, at least at the time of Gabriel Qatraya (7th century),²⁴ were very significant rites in the East Syrian Evening Office.²⁵ In imitation of Jerusalem usage, the lamp in the *Qestrōmā* was lit by the flame brought from the everburning lamp inside the veiled sanctuary, symbolizing according to Qatraya, "the mystery of the manifestation of Christ, the Sun of Justice, who through his manifestation destroyed the mist of darkness of error on earth and illumined the whole world with the light of his divine doctrine".²⁶ This ceremony, which signified also the communication of the light of Christ to his Church, was accompanied by a prayer, the beginning of which is given by Qatraya:

O Light, you who appeared on earth, at whose manifestation the people hasten, great Sun of Righteousness, who destroyed the power of error...²⁷

22. BOTTE, *Tradition Apostolique*, 64; ET from CUMING, *Hippolytus* 23.

23. Trans. WILKINSON, *Egeria's Travels*, 123-124.

24. Gabriel Qatraya was a teacher at the theological school of Seleucia; cf. BAUMSTARK, *Geschichte*, 200.

25. JAMMO, *Gabriel Qatraya*, 39-52.

26. Ms Brit. Mus. Oriental 3336, fol. 7r, cited in JAMMO, *L'Office du soir* 189.

27. *Ibid.*, fol. 11v, 189.

But later, by the time of Abraham Qatraya bar Lipeh (7th–8th century) and Pseudo George of Arbela (9th century), this Lucernarium rite became more solemn and distorted even to the point of losing its original symbolism: the communication of the flame from inside the sanctuary disappeared and the light became the subject of allegoric interpretation; the incense no longer signified the sweetness of the love of Christ, becoming a mere sign of honour shown to the altar, bishop, priests and faithful, each one receiving a determined number of incensings according to one's degree of dignity.²⁸ In the *Expositio Officiorum* the ceremony is described with the details of a procession of priest, deacons and subdeacons carrying the Gospel, Cross, candles and thuribles.²⁹ However, in spite of these later embellishments in the ritual of lighting the lamp, signifying the communication of Christ the Light to his Church, what is basic to the rite of the Evening Prayer in every tradition is

thanksgiving for the light, in which the Church uses the lamplighting at sunset to remind us of the Johannine vision of the Lamb who is the eternal lamp of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the sun that never sets.³⁰

The oblation of incense is another important element of Evening Office. The hymn which is sung during this ceremony is repeated five times for the sake of solemnity, intercalated between verses 1–2, 4 of Ps 84, which expresses the joy in the experience of God's nearness in the Temple and in the good fortune of being able to sing the praise of God forever:

Like the fragrance of sweet incense and the smell of a pleasant censer, receive O Christ, our Saviour, the request and prayer of your servants,³¹

In the Nestorian edition of the Breviary, we have two prayers for the imposition of incense:

28. JAMMO, *L'Office du soir*, 206.

29. "...quanta praeparentur in huius responsorii honorem: lampades accenduntur omnes: cum adhuc pauciores splenderent lampades, pro ratione typi qui per vetus testamentum administrabatur. Nunc portae absidis, quae est caelum aperiuntur, et egrediuntur crux et evangelium cum sacerdote; et ante hunc subdiaconorum atque diaconorum ordines cum luminibus ac thuribulis procedunt." *Expositio* I, 135.

30. TAFT, *Thanksgiving for the Light*, 40.

31. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 3; ET adapted from MACLEAN, *Offices*, 69.

Let us lift up praise to your glorious Trinity at all times, forever, Lord of all...;

and

O Christ who accepted the blood of the martyrs on the day they were killed, accept this incense from the hands of my feebleness in the loving kindness of your compassion, forever, Amen.³²

The prayer of incensing for all feasts of our Lord and for Sundays in the present Chaldean and Malabar breviary is as follows:

To the great and awful, holy and blessed, blissful and incomprehensible Name of your glorious Trinity and for your grace towards our race, we render thanks, adoration and glory at every moment, Lord of all.³³

Although the incensing receives no festive colouration, the early Lucernarium ritual, also implied in our Evening office for the feast of the Nativity, points to the first appearance of Christ on earth, namely to his birth, and to man's attitude of adoration and thanksgiving towards God for the gift of salvation through Christ, a theme which, in turn, points to the second coming of Christ adumbrated in the hymn *Lāku Mārā*, the culmination of the whole ceremony of Lucernarium.

3. *Laku Mara* (To You O Lord!)³⁴

This "typical resurrection hymn" of the East Syrian liturgy is known as the 'Song of Adam' in the Chaldean tradition.³⁵ It celebrates Christ, the source of our resurrection³⁶:

You, Lord of all, we confess; you, Jesus Christ, we glorify: for you are the quickner of our bodies, and you are the Saviour of our souls.³⁷

This hymn, which, since the time of Qatraya, has been an established element of the liturgy, is "one of the most archaic elements

32. KELAYTA, *Ktaba*, 23; DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 2; ET adapted from MACLEAN, *Offices*, 69; *East Syrian Rite*, 301. These prayers are borrowed from *Missale iuxta ritum Ecclesiae Syrorum orientalium id est Chaldaeorum*, Mosul, 1901. 27; cf. JAMMO, *L'Office du soir*, 204. n. 24.

33. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 3; ET mine.

34. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 320; trans. n. 5.

35. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 62.

36. *Expositio* I, 133-134.

37. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 4; ET from BRIGHTMAN, *Liturgies*, 25.

of the Chaldean liturgy. Its simplicity, its conciseness and its theological depth place it among the euchological masterpieces of the universal Church.”³⁸

In the Evening Office for the feast of the Nativity this hymn is repeated five times with Ps 121:1: “I rejoiced when they said to me...” and with *sabbah* and ‘*alam*.³⁹

The Ps 121:1 is an expression of the joy and enthusiasm of festival worshippers, as they delight in their return to Jerusalem, to the covenant sanctuary of the city of God and of the throne of the royal house of David.⁴⁰ For the Christian it tells of the final return to the heavenly Jerusalem and to its liturgy, the anticipation of which is the Church and her liturgy, where she rejoices at the salvation come through Christ. The concluding prayer⁴¹ of the *Lāku Mārā* summarizes the thankful, adoring attitude of the worshipping community, acknowledging in the person of the Child Jesus the beginning of redemption of her mankind from sin and death. With the same attitude of the Magi and the shepherds, who came to adore the child Jesus, we also confess the greatness of his birth, the august mystery of God’s divine dispensation (*mdabbrānūtā*).

4. ‘Onita d-Qdam⁴²

This ‘*Onitā* is preceded by three psalm verses, 95:1, 90:14, 102:18, and a verse from Isaiah, 9:6.

Ps 95:1 is an initial appeal of the liturgy in honour of Jahweh, the Saviour of the Israelites, the Lord of the universe, to render praise and thanks. The *qānōnā* of this psalm expresses the Christian motive of singing it: “From error, debts and death our Lord saved us in his mercy: adore him and praise him.”⁴³

Ps 90:14 has the following title in the East Syrian tradition,⁴⁴ which sheds light on the whole content of the psalm: “Supplication of the people in Babylon, recalling to God’s former

38. JAMMO, *Messe chaldeene*, 86; cf. also DALMAIS, *Expression of Faith*, 81.

39. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 320; trans. n. 6-7.

40. WEISER, *The Psalms*, 750.

41. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 320-321; trans. n. 8.

42. Ibid., 321; trans. n. 9

43. Ibid., 289*.

44. Psalm titles provide a practical guide to profoundly Christological prayer

graces (done) in favour of them, and asking him that he put an end to the miseries of their captivity.”⁴⁵ The community at worship is asking God for his mercy and steadfast love, work of salvation and his favour (vv. 13–17), so that they may “glorify and be glad for all the days” (v. 14).

Ps 102:18 : “The people to be created, let them praise the Lord” is interpreted by Iso‘dad of Merw (9th century)⁴⁶ to mean that ‘those who are to be born, ie., the generations that will come after’, will also admire and celebrate the Lord.⁴⁷

Isaiah 9:6 : “Because a child is born to us and a Son is given to us” is a classical Nativity text. St Ephraem, in his *Hymns on the Nativity*, has made reference to this messianic passage:

Today was born a child, and to him was given the name ‘Wonder’ for, a wonder it is that God showed himself as a child.⁴⁸

The *Onitā* that follows summarizes all these elements seen above: Christ the true Light of the world is born; the reason of all praise and jubilation is the manifestation of God as one among us to deliver us from the darkness of sin and death. Therefore, we join the angels singing the good tidings (Lk 2:13–14), so that we may appropriate for ourselves the salvation brought about by the birth of Christ and confess him as the Maker of all things.

5. *Marya Qretak* (The Vespéral Psalm)⁴⁹

Central to the East Syrian Evening Office is Ps 140, which derives its name from its first verse: “O Lord, I have called upon you” (*Māryā Qreṭāk*). Since fourth century it has been used for the Evening Prayer in almost all the Eastern

of psalms; ‘it is generally accepted that the titles of the psalms in the East Syrian Church have their origin in the commentary of the great Theodore of Mopsuestia’ (350–428); BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 9.

45. *Ibid.*, 69.

46. Iso‘dad was bishop of Hedatta in Mesopotamia. His Syriac commentaries on the Old and New Testaments are well-known works of Nestorian exegesis; cf. URBINA, *Patrologia syriaca*, 217.

47. ISO‘DAD, *Commentaire* 158–159.

48. HNat. I, 9; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 2.

49. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 321–323; trans. n. 11–14.

traditions.⁵⁰ In those vesper traditions of hagiopolite provenance like the Byzantine Sabaitic and Chaldean, Pss 141 and 116, usually with another psalm between them – here Ps 118:105–112 – are also added to this central psalm for the service.

Psalm 140 : St John Chrysostom says that the Fathers of the Church appointed this psalm to be said in the evening not merely because of its allusion to the evening sacrifice in its second verse, but also as a sort of salutary medicine and cleansing from sin.⁵¹ Iso‘dad of Merw refers the second verse of this psalm to the evening sacrifice of the lamb on the altar of the Lord by the Israelites (Exod 29:36–42; Num 28:3–6) not only for the sins of an individual, but for the praise due to God from the entire people.⁵² The whole psalm invites us to conversion, to pardon our enemies, to admit our own sins, to avoid occasions of sin and to trust in God’s help.

Psalm 141 : Here, as in Byzantine vespers, Ps 141 is added because of its incipit, similar to that of Ps 140 : “With my voice I invoked the Lord, with my voice I begged the Lord” (v. 1).

Psalm 118:105–112 : Ps 118, the longest in the Psalter, is an ‘alphabetic psalm’, divided into twenty-two sections according to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The eight verses of each strophe of the psalm in the original begin with the same Hebrew letter. The section that concerns us here is the fourteenth of the psalm. For Iso‘dad of Merw, this peculiarity of the psalm, having eight verses beginning with the same letter, alludes to the circumcision after the eighth day (Lev 12:3), to the New Sunday that follows the resurrection⁵³ and to the new age already signalled by St Gregory Nazianzen.⁵⁴ Theodore bar

50. MATEOS, *Office*, 42–43; VELLIAN, *Kanonanamaskaram*, 48.

51. “Many things in this psalm [140] are suitable for the time of evening. Not for this reason, however, did the fathers choose this psalm, but rather they ordered it to be said as a salutary medicine and forgiveness of sins, so that whatever has dirtied us throughout the whole length of the day, either in the marketplace or at home or wherever we spend our time, we get rid of it in the evening through this spiritual song. For it is indeed a medicine that destroys all those things.” PG 55, 427; ET from TAFT, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 42.

52. ISO‘DAD, *Commentaire*, 203.

53. *Ibid.*, 183.

54. *Discorse*, XLIV, 5; cf. PG 36, 612 & 613 A.

Koni (8th–9th century), a Nestorian monk and a biblical scholar in the city of Kaskar in Iraq⁵⁵ says that the apostles and the virtuous men of the Church consider the peculiar eight-verse structure of this psalm to be a sign of perfection: the number eight represents the perfection introduced by Christ according to the Law, i.e., the circumcision on the eighth day as ordered by God (Lev 12:3), which in turn is allegoric of our own circumcision from death and corruption.⁵⁶

But in actual fact the section of the psalm in question was inserted at vespers because of verse 105 with its obvious application to the Lucernarium of the evening office, the lighting of the evening lamp: “a lamp is your word to my feet and a light to my ways.” The *qanona* of this section too points to the Christian application of the same: “Light and life and truth is your word, O our Saviour.”⁵⁷ For the Christian who prays this, Christ is the word and very law of life: “I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). All these remind us of the Word Incarnate of God: “the true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world” (Jn 1:9). The light-symbol and the rite of evening prayer as a whole lead us to the very presence of Christ amidst us here and now. God’s word is a lamp to show the way through darkness (Prov 6:23). The true enjoyment of all the good is the outcome of the exact knowledge of and meditation on God’s word, being always under his government and solicitude and keeping it as a sublime treasure.⁵⁸ This word of grace was heard in Israel. Then, it came as the light of all nations, a new disclosure of the ‘glory of God’: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (Jn 1:14).

Psalm 116, as in Byzantine vespers, serves as the concluding doxology of the vespereal psalms. It is a short formula of praise showing the universality of the covenant of God through which God himself revealed his steadfast love and faithfulness.⁵⁹ The special refrain of this psalm, “let the people and (all) the

55. GRIFFITH, *Apology*, 161–162; URBINA *Patrologia Syriaca*, 216.

56. Memra V, 19, cf. SCHER, *Liber I*, 357; HESPEL-DRAGUET, *Seert*, 297.

57. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 313*.

58. ROMPAY, *Theodore*, 48–49.

59. EATON, *Psalms*, 270.

peoples glorify him," is a true response to the invitation in the first verse of the psalm: "glorify him all you nations," because in Christ all are saved.

For the feast of the Nativity these vespéral psalms of the ordinary are focussed on Christ by special refrains proper to the feast, repeated with all solemnity after each of the psalm verses⁶⁰: "Glory to you, glorified is your birth;" "Glorified are you and glorified is your birth;" "Glorified is your birth which gladdens all;" and "Let the people and (all) peoples glorify him;" "Glory to your name, Lord of all;" "By all mouths you be praised."

The concluding *Slota*⁶¹ proclaims the mystery of Incarnation: God the Word came down and became one among us to make us heirs of his glory and the image of his greatness.

6. Onita d-Batar ⁶²

This hymn is begun with the singing of the following verses:

Ps 98:1 : Ps 98 has the following Syriac title: "It predicts the marvellous return of the people from Babylon and invites everyone to praise God."⁶³ Commenting on the first verse, Theodoret (d. ca 458) says that God the Father declares that he wrought the salvation of mankind by one instrument alone, his 'right hand,' the Onlybegotten Son, in whose second coming, of which this psalm speaks as well as of his first, the triumph will be completed.⁶⁴

Ps 117:23 : What is "wonder in our eyes" (v. 23) has been referred to the preceding verse 22 of the psalm: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the edifice." According to Iso'dad of Merw, this is truly accomplished in Christ, as he himself said (Mk 21:42), and confirmed by the apostles

60. This way of singing the vespéral psalms, with their special refrains and melody proper to the feasts, is an old practice among the East Syrians, and it augments the solemnity of the whole celebration; cf, *Expositio* I, 142,

61. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 323; trans. n. 17.

62. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 323; trans. n. 18.

63. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 72.

64. *Interpretatio* in Psalmos, 1658.

(Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7).⁶⁵ In the New Testament, Christ is recognized as the 'rejected' and the 'chastened' one who becomes the 'head' (cf. also Mk 12:10ff.; Lk 20:17ff:). Thus the salvation extolled in the psalm, 'the Lord's doing', is again celebrated in the Christian liturgy, in which is recalled the mystery of God's divine dispensation.

Isaiah 8:18: "For a sign and a wonder in Israel." This verse reminds us of the greeting of the angel who brought the good news of the birth of the Lord to the shepherds: "For, to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:11), whom Isaiah had already named 'wonder' (Is 9:6).

The '*Onitā* proper confesses the marvellous nature of the salvific act accomplished by God in being born man from the virgin Mary to restore the lost glory to all mankind and the universe. This hymn is repeated with the addition of *Sabbah*. The repetition of hymns in the liturgy in general is to stress the particular theme of the celebration, and also to give more time to the worshipping community to meditate and assimilate the theme.

7. **Karozuta**⁶⁶ (litany: literally 'proclamation')

In the *Kārōzūtā*, the ordinary one for Sundays and feasts, Christ's mercy and love are publicly confessed. In the litany we proclaim that he is the Saviour and acknowledge him to be eternal, all-powerful, and that his birth gladdened both heaven and earth. We pray also for the grace of peace and tranquillity in the whole world, and for other general intentions of the Church.

8. **Qanddisa Allaha** (Trisagion)⁶⁷

According to Qatraya, in the Liturgy of the Hours the Trisagion is the last element.⁶⁸ In our evening prayer, it is concluded with a prayer to the Holy Trinity.⁶⁹

65. ISODAD, *Commentaire*, 181: cf also VOSTE, *Sur les psaumes* 287,

66. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 341; trans. n. 20.

67. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 9; see above 34, trans., n. 21. For a historico-theological discussion on this hymn, cf. BROCK, *Thrice-holy Hymn*, 24-34.

68. JAMMO, *L'Office du soir*, 193. In the East Syrian tradition, the Trisagion is taken to allude to the divine nature, sometimes explicitly the Trinity, at others the Son; cf. ID., *Messe chaldeene*, 94-96.

69. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 9-10; For ET of this prayer, cf. MACLEAN, *East Syrian Rite*, 304.

9. *Suyyake* (Conclusions)⁷⁰

In *Ramsā*, extra or additional psalms known as *suyyākē*⁷¹ are said before the '*Onīṭā d-Bāsāliqe* on feasts of our Lord and on commemorations, but not on Sundays. This usage is of monastic origin.⁷² For the feast of the Nativity the Pss 1–7 are purposely chosen, because, of this group, Ps 2 is generally considered messianic.

Psalm 1: The Syriac title of this psalm reads: "Exposition of the warning on the subject of good morality."⁷³ This psalm opens with the blessedness of one who keeps away from improper ways, and explains the manner of conduct proper to one who wishes to follow the ways of God. Iso'dad of Merw, explaining the first two verses of the psalm, says that "the way which leads to God is girdled by iron and soaked in blood, because man is opposed by his weak nature, by those who share the nature and by the opponent of the nature"⁷⁴ and therefore the recompense for the right faith and honest conduct is nothing but beatitude.⁷⁵

Theodore of Mopsuestia, commenting on the first verse, says that the blessedness is the fruit of perfection in virtue, an invitation effected by God's faithfulness to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and to the blessedness of Christ himself (1 Tim 6:15).⁷⁶

The *qānōnā* of this psalm expresses the same idea: "Blessed is he who carries your yoke and meditates your law, O Lord, night and day."⁷⁷ One who meditates and lives the law of the Lord day and night (v. 2) is like a tree planted by the streams of water (v. 3) and produces good fruits. The symbolism of the "streams of water" in a Christian perspective alludes to the Church with its liturgy and sacraments, source of salvation here and now.

Psalm 2 : The Syriac title of this psalm is: "It prophesies concerning what is done by the Jews at the time of the passion

70. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 323; trans. n. 22–23.

71. MACLEAN, *Offices*, 77, n. 6; JAMMO, *L'Office du soir*, 196.

72. JAMMO, *L'Office du soir*, 199, n. o

73. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 35.

74. ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, 22.

75. *Ibid.*, 24.

76. *Expositio in psalmos*, 647.

77. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 217*.

of our Lord and it reminds us of his humanity.”⁷⁸ The *qānōnā* of this psalm also refers to the crucifixion of Jesus.⁷⁹ All the same, the v. 7 speaks not only of the eternal generation of the Word, but also of that special day when tidings were brought by the angel to virgin Mary at Nazareth, hence of the Nativity as well as of the Resurrection of Christ. Theodore of Mopsuestia comments on the same verse: “He who was son before ages is born today as man.”⁸⁰ For Iso‘dad of Merw it points to three births: birth from the virgin; birth from water, namely his baptism in Jordan; and the birth from the tomb, that is, his resurrection.⁸¹ In brief, the New Testament proclaims the realization of the whole psalm in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 3 : This psalm is a petition for the deliverance from enemies and from their violence.⁸² Literally it refers to the flight of David from Absalom (2 Sam 15-19).⁸³ Verses 7-8 ascribe to God alone the power to save, and invoke his lifegiving blessing in favour of the community. The community at worship praying this psalm sees final deliverance and blessing in Jesus Christ, God incarnate.

Psalm 4 : The psalm affirms that apart from the Lord there is no hope, only God is the basis of all confidence and he testifies to his own experience of God’s help and protection in times of need: God hears, responds, God has compassion, God gives joy, God favours, God vivifies, God gives peace.⁸⁴

Psalm 5 : This psalm expressess the joy that emerges from the fact that one can confide oneself totally in God, conqueror of evil and upholder of all good, the joy that results from the sense of security of being protected by God, the joy that arises from the conviction that God blesses the just.

Psalm 6: This is a penitential “supplication of David while he was in distress because of his sin,”⁸⁵ as is also clear

78. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 35.

79. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 217*.

80. *Expositio in psalmos*, 650.

81. ISO‘DAD, *Commentaire*, 26.

82. See the *qanona* of the psalm, BEDJAN, *Breviarium*, I, 217*.

83. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 35.

84. SCHOCKEL, *Trenta Salmi*, 45

85. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 36.

from its qānōnā: "Be gracious towards my weakness. O my Fashioner, and lead me in your love."⁸⁶

Psalm 7 : The psalmist implores God to consider his justice, which is his innocence, in judging him, and praises him as Saviour of the true-hearted and as righteous Judge (vv. 10-16.) Therefore, we pray in the qānōnā of the psalm: "Blessed be God, who corrects and consoles his servants."⁸⁷

10. Slota⁸⁸

This is a prayer of pure praise directed to God the father for his divine dispensation through which he deigned to redeem our human nature by becoming man.

11. Surraya⁸⁹

This is an 'alleluia' psalm which according to ancient East Syrian practice, is said with sabbah, to which is added three times 'alleluia'. Ps 87 is chosen as suitable for the feast of the Nativity (see 136-137 above).

12. Slota d-Basalique⁹⁰

A prayer addressed to Christ, seeking acceptance of the whole liturgical celebration and asking for his merciful response to our daily needs always.

13. 'Oniata d-Basalique⁹¹

When the propers of Ramsa is over, there took place a procession which is called Bāsāliqe and said to have been instituted among the East Syrians by Patriarch Iso'Yahb III (d. 658).⁹² This procession consisted in taking the Cross from the Bema⁹³ and carrying it in procession to its proper place in the sanctuary

86. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 219*.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*, 12; 24.

89. *Ibid.*, 281*; see also 323; trans. n. 25.

90. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 323-324; trans. n. 26.

91. *Ibid.*, 324-325; trans. n. 27a-38a.

92 But this rite is also said to have an earlier origin prior to Iso'Yahb III, at the time of Catholicos Mar Aba (536-552). However, Gabriel Qatraya testifies to its Constantinopolitan origin at the time of Emperor Constantine. cf. JAMMO, *L'Office du soir*, 193-195, 208-209.

93. For details on the *Bema*, cf. TAFT, *Use of the Bema*, 326-359.

to honour the King Christ. Pseudo George of Arbela says that in the days between the crucifixion (Good Friday) and ascension, "they carry the Cross outside the church to show that the Apostles are about to go to preach."⁹⁴ During this procession the 'Oniātā d- Bāsāliqe together with verses from psalms and other scriptural verses are sung.

There are twelve stanzas narrating different events related to the birth of Christ: the birth in Bethlehem and the coming of the Magi (tran. n. 27a); Jesus Son of God taking humanity from the seed of Abraham (trans. n. 28a); the killing of the Holy Innocents (trans. n. 29); Mary bringing forth the child of wonder (trans. n. 30); Christ, born in the manger, is king and saviour (trans. n. 31); Christ is the Lord of heaven and earth (trans n. 32); the effects of Christ's birth such as the salvation of human nature (trans. n. 33); the passage from darkness to the light of knowledge (trans. n. 34); joy and jubilation in heaven, and on earth the breaking out in praises of Christ's glory (trans. n. 35); remission of sins and the gift of new life (trans. n. 36); peace and tranquillity on earth (trans. n. 37); and finally, participation in the eternal kingdom. (trans. n. 38a).⁹⁵

The two 'Onyātā d-Sloṭā that follow⁹⁶ ask for power and help from the Lord to fulfil the will of God in all what we do and for his assistance at all times.

The rubrics that follow⁹⁷ indicate that Mass is celebrated before Ramsā only if the feast of the Nativity falls on sunday. If it falls on a weekday, since it is a fasting day, there is no Mass, but only communion. 'Oniṭā d-Bem⁹⁸ is meant for the communion service, which takes place after Ramsā. If it is Sunday, although there is no fasting, communion is distributed at the same time and therefore Mass up until the fraction is celebrated immediately before Ramsā, but communion is delayed until the end of Ramsā.

After the kiss of peace, with the priest's usual concluding prayers⁹⁹ and the blessing of the people, Ramsā of the feast of the Nativity comes to an end.

94. *Expositio* I, 152.

95. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 323-325.

96. *Ibid.*, 325; trans. n. 39b-40.

97. *Ibid.*, trans. n. 42.

98. *Ibid.*, 325-326; trans. n. 43-44b. For more on this practice in the East Syrian tradition, cf. MATEOS, *Mysteres du Careme*, 449-458.

99. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 13-18; for the ET of these concluding prayers, cf. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 329-333, No. 111-137.

II Lelya—Sapra of the Feast of the Nativity

A. Lelya (Nocturns)

The Schema of the propers

Psalmody: hullale 12–15 = Pss 82–105

‘Oniātā d- Mawtbā

Qānōnā (Ps 95
(Ps 150

Tesbohtā

Kārōzūtā

Two Madrāse

Hullala 21 (1st marmitā: Exod 15:1–21; Is 42:10–13; 45:8
2nd marmita: Deut 32: 1–21a
3rd marmitā: Deut 32:21b–43

i. Psalmody

In Bedjan's *Breviarium* the whole Psalter is divided into *Hullale* and *Marmiā!ā*.¹⁰⁰ This division is said to have been inspired by that which was in use at Jerusalem, and the authorship of this arrangement is generally attributed to Mar Aba I. The division into marmiata seems to be more ancient than the division into hullale.¹⁰¹ There are sixty marmiata corresponding to the twenty one hullale of the Psalter, and there is a prayer at the beginning of each marmita.

In the propers of *Lelya*, four units of psalmody or hullale (12–15), comprising Pss 82–105, are prescribed for the night vigil of the feast of the Nativity.¹⁰² These psalms are recited with their *giyyōre* (farcings)¹⁰³, which are given at the bottom of the respective pages in the Psalter.

100. Marmiata is a group of two to four psalms with the exception of a few such as Pss 18, 36, 68, 78, 89, 104–106, each of which is itself a marmita, and Ps 118 which alone constitutes two marmiata. For the evolution of the term marmita and its usage in the Syrian Psalter, cf. MATEOS, *Une collection*, 53–61.

101. MATEOS, *Lelya–Sapra*, 316, 410–411.

102. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 326; trans. n. 47a.

103. See the title given to these refrains in *Breviarium* I, 278*. For the French translation of all these *giyyore*, cf. MATEOS, *Lelya–Sapra*, 353–356. The *qanona* given in red after the first or second verse of each psalm in this case is said only when a psalm has no *giyyora*.

Psalm 82 illustrates israel's sharp differentiation between gods and the Lord who is uniquely God. This invitation to vigilance against false gods can also be seen in the *giyyōrā* of the psalm: "As from sleep the vigilant mind (hawna) called me and woke me up: rise from the deep sleep and shake off the heaviness of your laziness."¹⁰⁴ In v. 8 of the psalm, "rise up, O God, and judge the earth, because you will inherit all the peoples". Theodoret sees the appeal to the incarnation and the vocation of the gentiles.¹⁰⁵ For Iso'dad of Merw, this verse is a prayer addressed to the glorious Christ, and he sees also a clear messianic allusion to that which is eventually accomplished in Christ.¹⁰⁶

Psalm 83 is an invocation and lament soliciting the intervention of God to protect the chosen people from the hands of the enemies,¹⁰⁷ because, as verse one and the *qānōnā* acknowledge, "nothing is equal to you among creatures, O God Almighty."¹⁰⁸

Psalm 84 offers praise to God through the love of his temple of Jerusalem. In verse 7, "he will show himself as God of gods in Sion," the patristic tradition sees a clear allusion to the incarnation.¹⁰⁹ The love for "thy dwelling place" (v. 1), the place of the life-giving presence of God, resounds in the appreciation and joy for the Church expressed in the *qānōnā* of this psalm: "how glorious and beautiful is your holy house, O God who sanctifies all."¹¹⁰

Psalm 85, according to Athanasius, announces the vocation of gentiles, the remission of sins and the conversion of the Jews.¹¹¹ For Theodore of Mopsuestia, verse 10, "the grace and the truth will meet," indicates to us that it is in truth that God gives us grace. He is 'God of truth' and he can give us everything in truth, because he has saved us from all what is evil for us and he alone is capable of giving us what he judges to be lasting good.¹¹² The grace and truth, says Iso'dad of Merw, have

104. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 278*

105. *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1529-1530.

106. ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, XV, 140.

107. LANCELLOTTI, *Salmi*, 555-556.

108. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 278.*

109. EUSEBIUS, *Commentaria*, 1011-1014; THEODORET, *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1543-1544,

110. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 279.*

111. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 369-372.

112. Hom. X, 5; cf. TONNEAU-DEVREESSE, *Les homelies*, 253.

already come to us and they have announced the salvation, which is already at hand.¹¹³ The *qānōnā* of the psalm prays for the salvation effected by the power of the Cross of Christ: "Send, O our Lord, help and salvation to your adorers through the great power of the Cross."¹¹⁴

Psalm 86 presents before us a pious Israelite, a servant of God, who, pursued until death by violent enemies (v. 14), has sought safety and salvation in the temple of God who is "good and merciful" (v. 5).¹¹⁵ We read in the book of Revelation: "Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed" (Rev 15:4), referring to v. 9 of the psalm: "All peoples you have made will come and adore you, Lord, and shall praise your name." Thus the whole psalm is a hymn of faith and hope of which God is the source.¹¹⁶

Psalm 89 is characterized by hymnic celebration (vv. 6–19), prophetic utterances (vv. 20–39) and by public and individual lamentations (vv. 40–52).¹¹⁷ This psalm, which is of liturgical origin,¹¹⁸ "stresses the divine steadfast love and faithfulness"¹¹⁹ of God by singing and proclaiming it to all nations (v. 1). The promises of God persist through the grace in the kings who are the descendants of David. These promises and the throne of David alluded to in the v. 29 of the psalm have become a reality among us through Christ, the descendant of David.¹²⁰ For the New Testament, the fidelity of God finds its highest expression in Christ, heir of the Davidic oracles (Lk 1:32–33; Acts 2:29f.; 13:22f.) The *qānōnā* of this psalm expresses this same truth in very vivid terms: "The good things which God promised to Abraham and David, in our days He fulfilled through the deeds in Christ, praise to him."¹²¹

113. ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, 142–143.

114. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 280.*

115. LANCELLOTTI, *Salmi*, 572.

116. Pss 87 & 88 have been treated above, see 136–138 above.

117. LANCELLOTTI, *Salmi*, 591–592.

118. SZORENYI, *Psalmi ad usum liturgicum*, 367.

119. EATON, *Psalms*, 219.

120. THEODORE OF MOPS., *Commentarius in Michaeam*, PG 66, 371–374; ID., *Commentarius in Zachariam*, PG 66, 557–558; ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, 147–148.

121. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 283.*

Psalm 90 is a "supplication of the people in Babylon, recalling to God his former graces (done) in their favour, and asking him to put an end to the misfortune of their captivity."¹²² In the first verse of this psalm, "Lord you have been to us a dwelling place for generations," Iso' dad of Merw sees its permanence even for the times to come.¹²³ Theodoret sees the very incarnation in the "sweetness of the Lord our God" of verse 17 of the psalm.¹²⁴ The whole psalm helps lead the worshipping community to recognize the greatness of the eternal Lord and to trust in his glorious power and therefore we pray in the *qānōnā* of the psalm: "O our Almighty Guardian, have mercy on us sinners."¹²⁵

Psalm 91, a song of confidence,¹²⁶ calls upon God to protect the faithful against the dangers lurking in the darkness. Gregory of Nyssa applies the whole psalm to the mystery of the incarnation, as it "sets forth his birth according to the flesh, he who is born to us today, (and) who is son eternally from and in the Father."¹²⁷ For the Christian, Christ is the "trust and refuge in whom he can confide" (v. 2). The *qānōnā* expresses this same idea: "O Christ, you are my trust; I will never be ashamed."¹²⁸

Psalm 92 is a "song of praise of the people for the victory of Hezekiah over Assyrians."¹²⁹ The worshipper is moved by God's saving deeds (v. 2-4) and by his verdict on the wicked (vv. 7-11), and he expresses thanks to God for his help and protection enjoyed in the past and hope for the same also in the future.¹³⁰ God's omnipotence is confessed also in the *qānōnā* of this psalm: "O the Powerful (One), who is omnipotent, guard us your adorers."¹³¹

122. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 69.

123. ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, 148-149.

124. *Interpretatio* in psalmos, PG 80, 1607-1608.

125. BEDAJN *Breviarium* I, 285.*

126. LUKE, *Under the Shadow*, 187.

127. *Tractatus secunds*, 8c, PG 44, 515-516.

128. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 286*

129. BLOEMENDAAL. *The Headings*, 70.

130. WEISER, *The Psalms*, 614-616.

131. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 286.*

Psalm 93 is a prediction “concerning the greatness of the help of God (manifested) through the return of the people.”¹³² The very first verse is a clear expression of the major theme of the psalm, the kingship of God, and vv. 1b–2 introduce the specific aspect of God’s kingship that provides the unifying motif for the entire psalm: the tangible symbol of kingship is the throne. The Christian tradition has seen in this psalm the theme of divine kingship of Christ (Rev 11:7; 19:6), whose kingdom is eternal (v. 2).¹³³

Psalm 94 has as its central theme faith and hope in the divine justice. The second letter of Paul to Timothy (4:8) alludes to the verse 2 of this psalm, calling the Lord “the righteous judge,” which is also confessed in the *qānōnā*: “O omniscient and all-powerful and the judge of all, you are our Lord; save your servants who call upon you.”¹³⁴

Psalm 95 has the liturgical setting of a solemn feast,¹³⁵ which invites one to praise and worship the Lord, the King and Ruler of the earth and to adore him who is God of Israelites. The second part of the psalm (vv. 8–11), however, reminds us that these divine praises as such mean nothing, unless we are in accordance with their own personal lives and loyal to God.¹³⁶ The *qānōnā* expresses the main reason for our celebrating the praise of God: “From error, sin and death our Lord saved us in his mercy; adore him and praise him.”¹³⁷

Psalm 96 is for Iso‘dad of Merw an invitation and exhortation to the people to thank God for having saved them from the captivity, and to adore him and offer him sacrifices.¹³⁸ Verse 13 is of significance with regard to the birth of Christ, “...for he comes to rule the earth. He shall rule the world righteously and the peoples faithfully.” The *giyyōrā* of this psalm, proper to the feast of the Nativity of Christ, gives new meaning to all the praises: “Upon this salvation which is for us today through Jesus, son of our race, who is born today.”¹³⁹

132. BLOEMENDAAL *The Headings* 70.

133. Memra III, 109 A, cf. HESPEL, *Urmiah*, 47.

134. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I 288*.

135. SZORENYI, *Psalmi ad usum liturgicum*, 261.

136. RIOS, *Call to Worship*, 77.

137. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 289*.

138. ISO‘DAD, *Commentaire*, 155.

139. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 289* (bottom of the page),

Psalm 97 expresses the salvation of the entire world and also the faith of all gentiles in the same.¹⁴⁰ Verse I proclaims: "the Lord reigns," and for Athanasius the "clouds and fog" (v. 2) signify the appearance of the Lord in the form of a servant, whereas, for Theodoret, they signify the invisibility of the divine nature.¹⁴¹ Besides, in the "lightnings that illumine the world" (v. 4), Theodoret sees also the appearance of the Son of Man in the world.¹⁴² We have, therefore, good reason "to rejoice in the Lord" (v. 12) and to acknowledge the presence of the Lord, because the "Sion which 'hears and is glad' (v. 8) is today the Catholic Church"¹⁴³ that celebrates the salvation and hence the invitation of the *giyyōrā* of this psalm: "Rejoice O saved people, and render praise unceasingly in the birth of the Saviour who gladdened (those) above and (those) below" and the assertion of the *qānōnā* of the same psalm; "The Church, sings the glory of the Lord who renewed you,"¹⁴⁴

Psalm 98 is a psalm of 'advent,' the liturgical character of which embraces the historical coming of Christ, beginning from his birth until his parousia; and in the liturgical context, the sacramental presence of Christ.¹⁴⁵ The patristic tradition in general understands this psalm in the light of the first and the second coming of Christ.¹⁴⁶ "The right hand and the holy arm" (v. 2) of God is Christ himself for the Fathers of the Church.¹⁴⁷ Athanasius understands the "salvation" in v. 2 as the very *incarnation* of the Son of God,¹⁴⁸ whereas for Augustine it is Christ himself.¹⁴⁹ Thus the invitation "to sing to the Lord a new song, for he has wrought wonder" (v. 1) is quite appropriate for us who celebrate our salvation in Christ and it has to be a 'new song,' because the covenant which God has sealed with the

140. ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in psalmos*, 417-418.

141. *Interpretatio in Psalmos*, 1651-1652.

142. *Ibid.*, 1653-1654.

143. VANDENHOFF, *Exegesis*, 51 (Latin trans. 50).

144. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 290*.

145. SCHOCKEL, *Trenta Salmi*, 378.

146. For Theodoret, it speaks more on the first coming of Christ; cf. *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1657-1658.

147. EUSEBIUS, *Commentaria*, PG 23, 1231-1232; AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 1372.

148. *Expositiones in psalmos*, PG 27, 419-420.

149. *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 1373.

mankind through Jesus Christ our Lord is ever new; he abolishes everything of the old and sets for the new things, because "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17).¹⁵⁰ The *giyyōrā* of this psalm exhorts us to sing praises to the birth of Christ from the virgin: "Praise him, sons of the Church, sons of the faithful Church, (praise) him who is born from the virgin [or baptized by the son of a sterile woman for Epiphany] for the salvation of the habitable earth."¹⁵¹

Psalm 99 is again a psalm of the kingship of God (v.1) and especially of the holiness of God, proclaiming repeatedly "he is holy" (vv.3.5.9). "The great Lord in Sion" (v.2) is, for Athanasius, Christ who is glorified and exalted in the Church.¹⁵² Therefore, in the *giyyōrā* of the psalm, we too sing alleluia to the king Christ: "Praise and alleluia, adoration and alleluia in the birth of Christ."¹⁵³

Psalm 100 "exhorts the people who have returned from captivity to enter the temple and to praise God for the wonders he has wrought."¹⁵⁴ We celebrate in the feast of the Nativity God's gift of Christ, the light and the dawn of salvation, as well expressed in the *giyyōrā* of the psalm: "Let us acknowledge and praise the child who is born to us and the son who is given to us"¹⁵⁵.

Psalm 101 emphasizes righteousness and loyalty, the qualities of an upright man before God. The first verse of this psalm celebrates the merciful God who is loyal and just in his dealings with the people.¹⁵⁶ The Patristic tradition in general sees in this celebration of the loyal, just and merciful God the glorification of Christ,¹⁵⁷ which we acknowledge in the *giyyōrā* of the psalm: "Let us sing alleluia and praise to the splendour of justice which has shone forth in the house of David."¹⁵⁸

150. Hom. I 2; cf. TONNEAU-DEVREESSE, *Les homelies*, 5.

151. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 291* (bottom of the page).

152. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 421-422.

153. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 291* (bottom of the page).

154. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 73.

155. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 292* (bottom of the page).

156. LANCELOTTI, *Salmi*, 670.

157. NESMY, *I Padri*, 521.

158. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 292* (bottom of the page).

Psalm 102 is a penitential prayer arising from the utter distress and darkness of the soul, but finding consolation “because, the Lord builds up Sion, and he will appear in his glory” (v.16), setting free the sons from death (v.20) and assembling the peoples and kingdoms to worship the Lord (v. 22), which symbolizes the whole Church at the worship of the King Christ.¹⁵⁹ The *giyyōrā* of this psalm is a prayer of such a community at worship: “O Merciful (One), hear our supplications and our prayers.”¹⁶⁰

Psalm 103 celebrates God’s mercy towards man in distress.¹⁶¹ This abounding and forgiving love of God is the central theme of the psalm. Commenting on the final verse of the psalm, Theodoret says that we are more privileged than the Jews to raise our hands to God in prayer (cf. I Tim 2:8), because Christ has told us: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23).¹⁶² And therefore we pray in the *giyyōrā*: “Give to the earth peace and tranquillity as you are wont.”¹⁶³

Psalm 104 is the song of a soul moved by strong faith in and ardent love for God, the Creator. The East Syrian title of this psalm gives us the content succinctly: “It describes the greatness of God through the variety of creation, and it teaches that each of the creatures is constituted wonderfully by him.”¹⁶⁴ The *giyyōrā* of the first section of this psalm (vv. 1–18) confesses the greatness of God’s name! “To your name is due praise at all moments;” that of the last section (vv. 19–35) renders adoration to the holy Trinity: “We adore you, Father; Son and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁵

Psalm 105 is a narration of God’s marvellous actions in favour of the chosen people, and helps Christians to know the powerful and faithful Lord of the covenant and builds up the worshipping community in experience of the same God. The

159. ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in psalmos*, 429–430.

160. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 293 * (bottom of the page).

161. LANCELLOTTI, *Salmi* 682.

162. *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1691–1694.

163. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 294* (bottom of the page).

164. BLOEMENDAAL, *The Headings*, 74.

165. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 295* (bottom of the page), 296* (bottom of the page).

“remembrance of God” (v. 8) of his promises, is a constant element of the whole salvation history. The very incarnation and the birth of Christ is seen as the culminating event and fruit of this ‘remembrance’ on the part of God of his promises made to Abraham and to his descendants down through the centuries.¹⁶⁶ Theodoret, in reference to the fidelity of God towards the promise for a “thousand years” (v.8), sees the perpetuity of the promise made to Abraham of a universal blessing realized in the appearance of Christ.¹⁶⁷

In short, all these psalms of the *Lelyā* of the feast of the Nativity of Christ prepare us for an authentic liturgical celebration, leading us to meditation on different themes, such as the Lord as supreme God and worldjudge, the beauty of Sion, God’s house, the ideal Israel, the great confidence in the Lord, his kingship and enthronement, the covenant, the punishment to evildoers, Israel’s vocation to bring others to God, the pain of helpless adandonment, God’s promises and their fulfilment, his omnipotence and saving deeds, his holiness, praise and thanks due to him, the characteristics of a just man.

ii. ‘*Oniātā d-Mawtbā*

This *Mawtbā* which follows the psalmody is like the original *Kathismata* of the Byzantine office. *Mawtbā* means ‘sitting’, for these chants, ecclesiastical composition found in the *Gazza* are sung sitting.¹⁶⁸ We have in our office for the feast of the Nativity 32 of these ‘*oniātā*’,¹⁶⁹ the first 25 and the last or 32nd of which deal in a special way with the themes proper to the feast of the Nativity. The other six, namely 4 ‘*oniātā d-Slotā*’¹⁷⁰ and 2 ‘*oniātā d-‘annide*’¹⁷¹ are chosen from the common collections. Each of these 32 *oniātā* is inspired and introduced by a psalm verse, except the last one, which is preceded by *sabbah*.

166. LANCELOTTI, *Salmi*, 706.

167. *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1711–1712.

168. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 51.

169. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I* 326–337; trans. n. 48–79a.

170. *Ibid.*, 333–334; trans. n. 73–76

171. *Ibid.*, 334; trans. n. 77–78.

a. The angel's visit to Mary

The first three 'oniāṭā have the theme of the Angel's visit to the virgin Mary and are introduced by the psalm verses, 57:3; 18:10; and 128:8 respectively.

The 1st 'oniṭā : Ps 57:3 : "God sent his goodness and his truth;"
 "Who sent from heaven and saved me"
 (trans. n. 48).

The Psalmist prays for the sending forth of the angels of salvation: God's goodness and truth. The Fathers of the early Church see in this verse a clear reference to the sending of Christ the Son by the Father.¹⁷²

The 2nd 'oniṭā : Ps 18:10 : "And he flew upon the wings of the wind" (trans. n. 49).

Since God makes the winds his messengers (cf. Ps 104:4), he is also spoken of poetically as riding on the storm clouds, or on the angelic creatures called Cherubim. His earthly throne on the ark of the covenant was likewise formed by two-winged Cherubim (cf. Exod 37:7-9). Athanasius refers the above verse to the swiftness of Christ's coming and to his presence and help for the Christians.¹⁷³

The 3rd 'oniṭā: Ps 121:8 : "I will say: 'Peace be with you'"
 (trans. n. 50).

The psalmist is inviting the pilgrim-worshippers to pray for the well-being of the holy city, Jerusalem, which is at the same time symbol and source of peace.¹⁷⁴ 'Peace' ('Shalom' in Hebrew and 'Slāmā' in Syriac) here is a word richer in meaning than the English word peace and it includes the idea of happiness, prosperity and safety.¹⁷⁵ In our context of the 'oniṭā, the wishing of peace to the virgin Mary is not simply a formal salutation, but a message of salvation.

Inspired by these psalm verses, the first three 'oniāṭā express the idea that God Almighty in his goodness sends his

172. EUSEBIUS, *Commentaria*, 507-508; ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in psalmos*, 269-270.

173. ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in psalmos*, III.

174. LANCELOTTI, *Salmi*, 831, n. 8.

175. PAYNE-SMITH, *Syriac Dictionary*, 582.

angel to the virgin Mary with the message of salvation. Mary is called 'blessed' in view of the salvation that comes through her for all people; she is blessed, because she carries the King of kings, the Lord of the worlds, the Son who makes all creatures happy, the Lord who saves us from sin and death; she brings forth the forgiver; she is blessed, because as chaste virgin she was found agreeable to God.

b. Prophecies fulfilled

The 4th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st 'oniāṭā¹⁷⁶ describe the Old Testament prophecies which spoke about the birth of the Saviour. The psalm verses that accompany these 'oniāṭā, corresponding to the respective numbers, are the following:

The 4th 'oniṭā: Ps 106:2 : "Who is able to utter the marvels of the Lord" (trans. n. 51).

This verse expresses the impossibility for man to grasp the significance and depth of the marvellous and numerous signs of salvation given by God to the people of Israel throughout their history.¹⁷⁷ And the same is true of the miraculous birth of Christ from a virgin.

The 18th 'oniṭā: Ps 25:4 : "Lord, show me your ways" (trans. n. 65).

The psalmist expresses here his desire to be confirmed in faith and divine love: the knowledge of the divine will is light and force for man in his miserable life, because God's "ways are delicious and his paths peace" (Prov 3:17). The "ways" here means the divine will which man can embrace as the norm of life.¹⁷⁸ The verse 4 therefore is a prayer that seeks the enlightenment from God to understand fully the mysteries of his divine dispensation foretold by the prophets and accomplished through the birth of Christ.

The 19th 'oniṭā: Ps 36:9 : "Because with you is the fountain of life" (trans. n. 66).

God as the "fountain of living water" is one of the loved expressions characteristic of Prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jer 2:15; 17:13),

176. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 327, 331-332.

177. LANCELOTTI, *Salmi*, 715.

178. RAVASI, *Salmi* I, 473.

whereas in the sapiential Books “fountain of life” is the source of all wisdom (Prov 13:14), or fear of God (Prov 14:27), or prudence (Prov 16:22). For St John, however, in Christ “was the life and the life was the light of men” (Jn 1:4). Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius and Augustine see Christ himself as the ‘fountain of life’;¹⁷⁹ for Ephraem, it is baptism.¹⁸⁰

The 20th ‘oniṭā: Ps 112:4 : “The light dawned through darkness for the just” (trans. n. 67).

The ‘oniṭā that follows this psalm verse confesses Christ as the light, life and the truth (Jn 14:6).

The 21st ‘oniṭā: Ps 105:3 : “Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice” (trans. n. 68).

This is an invitation to rejoice in the Lord, and it expresses also the liturgical and festal dimension of the joy in God’s faithfulness in his promises¹⁸¹ fulfilled in sending his Son to us.

c. Revelation of the mystery

The 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 14th, 16th and 25th ‘oniāṭā¹⁸² explain the marvellous nature of Jesus’ birth and the great mystery revealed through it. The respective psalm verses point to the miraculous interventions of God in Israel’s history and they invite us today to praise God who revealed himself ultimately through his Only begotten Son Jesus Christ:

The 5th & 6th ‘oniāṭā: Ps 46:8 : “Come, behold the deeds of God” (trans. n. 52–53).

These two ‘oniāṭā have this same verse. We recognize the ultimate fulfilment of the “deeds” of God in his new ‘coming’ in Jesus Christ, the new Emmanuel (Mt 1:23), the powerful presence of God which is ever renewed in worship.

The 8th ‘oniṭā: Ps 103:20 : “Bless the Lord, O you, his angels” (trans. n. 55)

The psalmist here calls upon the heavenly spirits to join him in his hymn of grateful praise of God’s kingship and his mercy which reaches out to the whole universe. We who praise God,

179. NESMY, *I Padri*. 158.

180. *Hymnen de Epiphania* XII, 5; cf. HNat., CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 188.

181. LANCELLOTTI, *Salmi*, 704.

182. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 328–330, 333.

says Athanasius, share the same dignity of the angels¹⁸³ and therefore we shout with joy praises to God the Father who sent his Son, the saviour of all.

The 10th 'oniṭā: Ps 55:19 : "He who is before the worlds"
(trans. n. 57).

St Augustine refers this verse to Christ, who is in time from the virgin Mary, and who is the Word with the Father in the beginning before the ages.¹⁸⁴ The same idea is developed in the corresponding 'oniṭā.

The 14th 'oniṭā: Ps 67:1 : "May our God have mercy on us"
(trans. n. 61).

The realization of this verse can be seen in the New Testament: God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David... to perform the mercy promised to our fathers... to give light to those who sit in darkness" (Lk 1:69, 72, 79). The corresponding 'oniṭā expounds the mystery of incarnation through which God stoops down out of love for man to redeem him.

The 16th 'oniṭā : Ps 96:11 : "The heavens will rejoice and the earth will exult" (trans. n. 63)

The psalmist addresses even inanimate creation to praise the Lord.¹⁸⁵ For the East Syrian exegete, "the heavens rejoice" (with the angels) because they see Christ's humanity, and the "earth exults" because it sees his divinity.¹⁸⁶ By the coming of the saviour, we have become the 'heaven' that narrates the glory of God.¹⁸⁷ The corresponding 'oniṭā explains the reason for all the joy: the king Christ is born from the virgin and all creation is reconciled with God through him, who has brought hope and salvation to all.

The 25th 'oniṭā : Ps 105:9 : "He who kept his covenant with Abraham" (trans. n. 72).

The psalmist recounts here the Lord's promise made to the Patriarchs (vv. 8-11) which in its turn is fulfilled in the incar-

183. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 433-444.

184. *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 671.

185. ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, 155.

186. VANDENHOFF, *Exegesis*, 60, (Latin trans. 56).

187. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Tractatus secundus*, c 9, PG. 44, 529-532.

nation (Lk 1: 54-55, 72-73).¹⁸⁸ The 'oniṭā acknowledges the mystery of the incarnation as the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham and his descendants.

d. The visit of the shepherds and the Magi

The 7th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 15th and 17th 'oniṭā¹⁸⁹ narrate the visit of the shepherds and the Magi, who received the good tidings of the birth of Jesus and came to worship him with their gifts and offerings. The following psalm verses accompany these 'oniṭā:

The 7th 'oniṭā : Ps 48:2 : "Joy in all the earth" (trans. n. 54).

St Ambrose, commenting on this verse, says that the coming of the saviour has spread joy in the whole world, because he has saved us from sin and death.¹⁹⁰ The 'oniṭā speaks of the joy spread all over Bethlehem: the angels sing glory, the shepherds sing praises, the Magi come from the East with their choicest offerings and all of them worship and adore the divine Babe born in the manger.

The 11th 'oniṭā: Ps 97:4 : "His lightnings illumine the world"
: (trans. n. 58).

For Theodoret, this verse signifies the coming of the Lord Jesus in fulfilment of the vision of Daniel (7:9-10).¹⁹¹ The 'oniṭā has the theme of the light that appeared in Judea in the person of Christ, who gladdened the entire world through his birth. It speaks also of the Magi who brought gifts to the king born in Bethlehem.

The 12th 'oniṭā : Ps Ps 72:19 : "And his glorious name is blessed
for ever" (trans. n. 59).

Traditional interpretation rightly treats the psalm as messianic in a typical sense.¹⁹² In the 'oniṭā we praise Jesus who inspired the Magi to come adore his glorious name, and with the same spirit of the Magi we too render praise to Jesus whose birth makes us happy.

188. For more on this psalm, see above, 159-160.

189. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 329-331.

190. *Psalmos davidicos* PL 14, 1147.

191. *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1653-1654.

192. NESMY, *I Padri*, 356-365; ISO'DAD, *Commentaire* xv, 120.

The 13th 'onitā : Ps 97:4 : "His lightnings illumine the world"
(trans. n. 60).

The corresponding 'onitā speaks of Christ, who is the splendour from the Father and who shone forth for the salvation of all from darkness. The psalm verse that accompanies it is proper to the context and has been explained above.¹⁹³

The 15th 'onitā : Ps 119:7 : "And I was speaking peace" (trans. n. 62).

It is Christ who "is our peace" and who "announced the good news of peace" (Eph 2:14, 17) to all those who are far and near. The immediate effect of this experience of peace at the birth of Christ is explained in the 'onitā: the kingship of Christ is acknowledged and the Magi greet Jerusalem and bring gold, incense and myrrh to offer to him and they adore and worship him.

The 17th 'onitā : Ps 117:23 : "Before the Lord this was, and it is wonder in our eyes" (trans. n. 64).

This verse can be understood better in reference to the preceding verse 22 of the psalm, which is applied to Christ: "The stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone" (cf. Mt 21:42 Lk 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7; Eph 2:14-16, 20). 'The corner stone' is Christ himself in the patristic understanding.¹⁹⁴ In his *Hymns on the Nativity*, Ephraem writes:

Men of stone cried out and gave praise,
who had a heart of stone.
They applauded in presence of the Stone,
the rejected that has become the Head.
Stones were made flesh by that Stone,
and obtained mouths to speak;
stones cried out through that Stone;
Blessed be your birth
that has caused stones to cry out.¹⁹⁵

Verse 23, therefore, instills in us sentiments of amazement at the work of salvation effected by the birth of Christ, who unites the whole world in truth.¹⁹⁶ The 'onitā also praises the greatness of

193. See above, 157.

194. NESMY, I padri, 623.

195. HNat. XXIV, 19; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 125; ET adapted from NPNF (second series), XIII, 157.

196. CHRYSOSTOM, *Expositiones in psalmos* PG 55, 336.

the day of Jesus' birth, which brought peace and hope to everyone, and impelled the shepherds and the Magi to come to adore the majesty of the new-born Babe.

e. The fruits of the incarnation

The 9th, 22nd 23rd 'oniātā¹⁹⁷ describe the fruits and benefits of the birth of Christ. The accompanying psalm verses are explained below:

The 9th 'oniātā: Ps 66:4 : **"They shall praise your name for ever"**
(trans. n. 56).

This psalm verse as understood by Athanasius reveals the fact that the whole universe is united to sing the victory of Christ over the powers of the world.¹⁹⁸ The 'oniātā proclaims hope and reconciliation brought about by the Emmanuel.

The 22nd 'oniātā: Ps 113:2 : **"Blessed be the name of the Lord"**
(trans. n. 69)

In the entire context of Ps 113, the "name of the Lord" stands for the person of God himself, with the emphasis on his salvific presence, and the invocation of the blessing of the name of God from the part of man implies devout and humble acknowledgement of God's majesty.¹⁹⁹ We, therefore, pray daily: "Holy be your name" (Mt 6:9) as Christ himself has taught us.²⁰⁰ The 'oniātā expresses the fruits of the birth of Christ: enlightenment of the whole universe, bringing all people to true worship; renewal of the whole cosmos; salvation from death and the hope of eternal life; the exaltation of human nature. It acknowledges the salvific power of Christ in calling on his glorious name.

The 23rd 'oniātā: Ps 97:4 : **"His lightnings illumine the world"**
(trans. n. 70).

The 'oniātā, which is inspired by this psalm verse, and has been treated above (see p. 157), acknowledges again the joy both in heaven and on earth at the birth of Christ, because Christ the Light has destroyed the power of darkness and conquered sin and death; he has made mortal men heirs of the heavenly kingdom and everlasting life.

197. BEDJAN. *Breviarium* I, 329, 332-333.

198. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 287-288.

199. LANCELOTTI, *Salmi*, 773-774.

200. CHRYSOSTOM, *Expositiones in psalmos*, 301.

f. Actuality of Christ's presence

The 24th 'oniātā²⁰¹ extols the month of December, in which we celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Christ. This is sung with the following psalm verse:

Ps 49:1 : 'Listen to this, all peoples' (trans. n. 71).

According to the Patristic interpretation, it is Christ who is inviting us "to listen."²⁰² Mentioning the month of December, the 'oniātā concretizes the actuality of the presence of Christ, who is the ultimate source of all the good on this earth, and the hope for all who dwell in it.

g. 'Oniātā d-Slōtā

Out of four 'oniātā d-Slōtā,²⁰³ the first two request God to accept the vigil and to grant the petitions of the worshipping community. The third makes on the altar the memory of Mary, the 'Mother of God', and implores her intercession, and the fourth remembers the apostles and disciples of Jesus who went out to preach the good news of salvation in different parts of the world.

h. 'Oniātā d-'Annide

We have two 'oniātā d-'Annide,²⁰⁴ which are eschatological in content, as they are prayers for the departed souls: at the glorious second coming of Christ, when all the departed will rise up for the final judgement, Christ is requested to show mercy, enabling them and us to enjoy the eternal happiness. Since the psalm verses which accompany these 'oniātā are either treated above in this chapter or are self-explanatory, we do not deal with them further.

i. Christ, true God and true Man

'Oniātā d-Mawt̃bā are concluded with sabbah and a long hymn²⁰⁵ of profession of faith, in which are narrated the doctrine of Christ's divinity and humanity as revealed and taught by Christ himself since his incarnation, with the details of his public

201. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 333.

202. NESMY, *I Padri*, 218.

203. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 333-334, trans. n. 73-76.

204. *Ibid.*, 334-trans. n. 77-78.

205. *Ibid.*, 334-337, trans. n. 79a.

life until the sending of the Holy Spirit, thus establishing his Church on earth. Consequently, the whole mystery of God's divine dispensation (mdabbrānūtā) is recalled and celebrated on the feast the Nativity of Christ.

iii. *Qānōnā*

In the Mawtbā, the 'oniātā are followed by qānōnā psalms.²⁰⁶ Psalms 95 and 150 are chosen with antiphons proper to the spirit of the feast of the Nativity. Both are psalms of praise and thanksgiving to the Creator of the universe, the glorious King. The antiphons have the same theme, praising Jesus with the words of angel's hymn (Lk 2:14) and inviting us all to join the angels, shepherds and the Magi to adore Christ.

iv. *Tesbohtā*

Following the qānōnā, a christological hymn of Babai the Great (d. ca 627/8), is sung.²⁰⁷ The East Syrian doctrine on the "prosopic" union is its content. According to its original terminology,²⁰⁸ there are *two qnōmē*, *two kyānē* and *one parsōpā* in Christ: Christ in his humanity was united with the Father in one dignity; Christ is one, the Son of God in two kyānē; the two kyānē of Christ are preserved in their qnōmē in one parsōpā and one sonship; the sonship of the Son is in two kyānē and in one divine parsōpā; the divine nature of Christ is from the nature of his Father, the human nature from his mother; the intervention of the Holy Spirit and the virginal birth from Mary are also dealt with.

v. *Karozutā*

This litany²⁰⁹ contains general supplications for the ministers of the Church. It also recalls the creation of man in God's glorious image; God's promise of salvation made to Abraham and to other chosen ones; fulfilment of these promises in Jesus Christ, and the continuation of the same today through the Church; God is the Lord and Creator of all; he is glorified in heaven and

206. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 337, trans. n. 80b-83.

207. *Ibid.*, 57-58, trans. n. 84a. Translations of this hymn are given in English by PODIPARA, *Mariology*, 173-174; in French by MATEOS, *Lelya Sapra*, 114-115; in Italian by YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica*, 111-112.

208. For fear of "Nestorianism," Bedjan uses the word 'qnoma' in 'stead of' 'of Parsopa' in his version of this hymn.

209. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 337, trans. n. 85.

adored on earth; he wills the salvation of all the creatures and therefore leads all from error of darkness to the knowledge of truth, etc.,. The *kározutā* is concluded with a prayer to Christ to make his Church triumphant in his second coming, and to let peace reign supreme in the Church.

vi. *Madrāsā*

This is a dogmatic, didactic hymn of two or three (at times four) strophes with a refrain repeated after each strophe. This ecclesiastical poetry is composed independently of the psalms. Originally it was a long composition of twenty or more strophes,²¹⁰ although in practice the East Syrians chant only three strophes, or, exceptionally, four or five. For the feast of the Nativity, we have two alternative hymns of three strophes each.

The refrain of the first *Madrāsā*²¹¹ praises God who saved us through Christ born of Mary and makes us share in his kingdom: "Praise to him who has saved us through the Child (born) of Mary, and has allowed us to participate in the kingdom with him." The hymn itself confesses the incomprehensibility of the greatness of the Lord; he who is unlimited becomes limited in his humanity, and thereby he who is far away comes closer, so that we may reach him; he is beyond all measure indescribable by the human mind; no one can grasp him, so great is his being and his fatherhood.

The refrain of the second *Madrāsā*²¹² glorifies the incomprehensible divinity and humanity of Christ: "Glory to the Child, whose Father is from heaven, and mother from the earth, and (who is) incomprehensible." The hymn in its first strophe narrates the marvellous nature of the birth of Christ; it speaks of the messenger star, which is at the service of the Son to announce the good news. The second strophe greets Mary, who gladly takes care of the new-born Child; greets the manger, symbol of the altar; greets the clothes that covered the Child; greets Joseph, the angel Gabriel, the world and the worshipping commu-

210. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*. 491.

211. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I 337-338; trans. 86-87. I am indebted to Professor P. Yousif who identified for me the first strophe of this hymn with Ephraem's *HEccl.* XXI, 3 (cf. CSCO 198, Syr. 84, 46). The second strophe is identical with Ephraem's *CNis.* III, 2 (cf. CSCO 218, Syr. 92, 11).

212. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 338; trans. n. 88-89a.

nity: all these greetings, in short, point to universal happiness at the birth of the Saviour. The third strophe says that the birth of Christ is in fulfilment of the prophecies; that the powers of the world are overcome through the birth of Christ; that the gifts of gold, myrrh and incense are offered to the new-born king; that the angels and men, heaven and earth, all sing with joy in one voice.

vii. *The 21st Hullala: The type of our resurrection and of Christ's Second Coming*

After the *madrāsē* the singing of the 21st (and the last) hullala of the Chaldean-Malabar psalter begins. This hullala comprises Old Testament canticles rather than psalms. These canticles are sung together with the prayers given in the psalter. According to the ancient East Syrian tradition, in the monastic office of Lelya of the great feasts, the whole psalter with its *qanone*, divided into three *Mawṭbe*, was recited. However, this 21st hullala originally belonged to the cathedral vigil of resurrection (*qāle d-Sahrā*)²¹³ and was understood as the type of our resurrection and of the second coming of Christ.²¹⁴

The first *marmitā* of the hullala is composed of two canticles, Exodus 15:1-21 and Isaiah 42:10-13, 45:8, and is begun with its usual *slotā*²¹⁵ of adoration and thanksgiving directed to the trinitarian God, who is eternal, marvellous, strong and merciful, etc.

Exodus 15:1-21:²¹⁶ This canticle of Moses celebrates God's saving power, delivering his people from their enemies through the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, and leading them to the victorious conquest of the promised land. Commenting on the verse 2 of this canticle, Ephraem says that God showed his "strength" by drowning the Egyptians, and he is "worthy of praise" because he delivered the Israelites.²¹⁷ Theodore Bar Koni comments on this canticle:

God has shown his splendour and the power of his strength through the ruin of their enemies, because he has

213. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 398-403; *Les différentes especes*, 59-62; YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica* (Appunti), 30.

214. *Expositio* I, 188.

215. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 338; trans. n. 90.

216. Ibid., 338, 332.*; trans. n. 91.

217. FEGHALI, *Commentaire*, 119.

not only snatched them away from the hands of the enemies and freed them from their constraint, but he also drowned them in the depth of the sea...Praise Yahweh, celebrate the Existant (Ityah), the Creator of the universe, of the heavenly and earthly beings... because it is to him, as Lord, that is due from our part all glory... He has shown the power of his strength through the redemption he has brought about for us. They celebrated and glorified, because he is truly God of our Fathers.²¹⁸

Aphraat interprets the role of Moses, connecting the theme of the Red Sea with that of the waters of death:

The Jews escaped at the Pasch from the slavery of Pharaoh; on the day of the crucifixion, we were freed from the captivity of Satan. They immolated the lamb and were saved by its blood from the destroyer; we, by the blood of the well-beloved son, are delivered from the works of corruption that we have done. They had Moses for a guide; we have Jesus for our Head and Saviour. Moses divided the sea for them and had them cross it; our Lord opened hell and broke its gates, when he went down into depths and opened them and marked out the path for those who come to believe in him.²¹⁹

For Iso‘dad of Merw, ‘this hymn is partly a history, a prayer and a praise.’²²⁰ In short, this is a paschal canticle par excellence. The exodus and the passage through the Red Sea were type of definitive exodus of the chosen people, of all those who are to be saved, lining up on the day of general resurrection behind Christ, the new Moses, to definitively get away from the powers of Satan, the figure of Pharaoh, and thus find one’s way to the promised land of heaven.²²¹ The general qānōnā of this canticle in the Chaldean-Malabar psalter summarizes the meaning of the canticles applying it to the new people of God, the Church: “Blessed is the Being (Itāh), the Creator (Barōyā), who through many signs delivered his people, and through Christ saved his Church.”²²²

218. Memra 9, IA; cf. HESPEL, *Urmiah*, 98–99.

219. *Demonstratio* XII, 8; cf. PS I, 521.

220. ISO‘DAD *Exode – Deuternome*, 37.

221. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra* 235.

222. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 332* .

The special qānōnā (giyyōrā)²²³ of this canticle for the feast of the Nativity, "Gloriously I will praise you," seems to be, inspired by the refrain of the canticle of Miriam (Exod 15:22) which points to the liturgical celebration of the Exodus in Judaism, and thus places the Jewish liturgy at the background of the Christian liturgy.²²⁴ This qānōnā is repeated, for solemnity's sake, with every two verses of the above canticle.

The next canticle, Isaiah 42:10-13 + 45:8, is also sung with a special qanona.²²⁵ "The Being who exists from eternity," repeated, as above, with every two verses of the canticle.

The above canticle from Isaiah is an invitation to all the nations around Israel to join them in rendering thanks and glory to God, the Lord of history,²²⁶ because the extraordinary redemption of Israelites from the Egyptian tyranny calls for a 'new song' (v. 10). For Cyril of Alexandria, the crossing of the Red Sea, the gift of manna in the desert, the water from the rock and the final entrance to the promised land – all these are new and marvellous. But for him still more marvellous and new is the redemption brought about by Christ: we are saved not only from the material powers, but from the spiritual servitude to sin and death; we are given in Christ the 'manna' of right understanding and the heavenly, lifegiving bread of the Eucharist; we drink from the spring which is Christ himself; we too cross the Jordan through baptism, and finally we enter the promised land of the saints.²²⁷ Therefore, we recall through this chant God's marvellous deeds in favour of the Israelites, and experience the greatness of the salvation finally accomplished today here and now for each one of us. And thus, together with the angels who celebrate the King Christ and the Lord in heaven, the whole universe adores his name.²²⁸

The second marmiṭā, Deut 32:1-21a, is preceded by the ṣloṭā,²²⁹ asking God the Father to fill the hearts of the faithful

223. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 338* ; trans. n. 91.

224. WINZEN, *Pathways*, 6.

225. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 338, 333.* ; trans. n. 92.

226. BEAUCAMP, *Chant nouveau*, 158.

227. *Commentariis*, Liber V, orat. I; PG 70, 859-860.

228. THEODORET, *Commentariis* in Isaiam, PG 81, 413-414.

229. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 338; trans. n. 93.

with the right doctrine, and to give the necessary grace to understand the will of God and to abide by the same every day by producing fruits worthy of his kingdom. The special qānōnā expresses the jubilation in the birth of Christ the King: "Sing alleluia, sing alleluia, sing alleluia, O Vigilers, in the birth of Christ the King."²³⁰ This is also repeated with every two verses of the canticle.

Deut 32:1–21a²³¹ is the first part of the canticle of Moses. This canticle in its entirety resumes, according to Iso'dad of Merw, all three books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and thus is a summary of the whole salvific economy which took place until the coming of Jesus Christ.²³² The content of this chant is that, in spite of the special love God has for his people which placed them above all others and showed them more solicitude than ever before (vv. 2–14),²³³ Mose shows how this chosen people rejected the true God for other gods (vv. 15–21).

The last marmiṭā, Deut 32:21b–43, which is sung on the bema, has the ṣlotā²³⁴ addressed to the Holy Trinity. This prayer, though not very characteristic of the mystery of the feast of the Nativity,²³⁵ asks for forgiveness from God who is always faithful to the covenant.

Each pair of the peṭgāme (verses) of the above marmiṭā has its own qānōnā proper to the feast of the Nativity. Therefore we have 38 qānōne in all, the last two of which are accompanied by 'sabbah' and 'alam' respectively.²³⁶ We do not give any further explanation of these qānōne, which narrate the mystery of the birth of Christ, as they are clear in themselves.

The marmiṭā speaks of God's reproach and judgement addressed to the chosen people, for losing the sense of God, and for their ingratitude towards the divine call (vv. 21b–33). God's wrath is turned also against the enemies of his people (v. 41).

230. *Ibid.*, 338, 334*; trans. n. 94.

231. *Ibid.*

232. ISO'DAD, *Exode-Deuteronomie*, 179.

233. THEODORE BAR KONI, Memra 3, 55A, 15–25; cf. HESPEL, *Urmiah*, 39.

234. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 339; trans. n. 95.

235. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 122.

236. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 339–342; trans. n. 96–134.

But he assures his people of final liberation and salvation (v. 35f.), if they will understand the utter powerlessness of other gods and repent and finally return to God, their true Lord and liberator.²³⁷ For he has proved that it belongs to his divine nature to give immortality, and that it pertains to his power to rise from among the dead and to free from punishment those who are under condemnation (v. 39).²³⁸ This canticle, therefore concludes with the invitation to the whole universe to praise the chosen people whom God protected, and to celebrate the wonderful deeds of God.

2. Qale d-Sahra

The Schema of the Propers

Three chosen psalms: 2, 72, 110

‘Oniātā d-Lelya

Qānōnā

Hpāktā (Tesboḥtā)

Kārōzūtā

This office of cathedral origin, known as the “office of the resurrection,”²³⁹ was the ancient East Syrian Sunday vigil analogous to that of Jerusalem described by the pilgrim-nun Egeria.²⁴⁰ In the course of centuries, it has undergone much evolution and change, especially with regard to the selection of chants and psalms, and has been slowly integrated into Lelya, thus gradually losing its character of an independent office.²⁴¹ However, in its structure and content it is distinct from Lelya.

i. “Three Chosen Psalms”

In the Qāle d-Sahrā²⁴² of the feast of the Nativity is prescribed the singing of three psalms, 2, 72, 110, directly prophetic of the mystery of the birth of Christ and hence suitable

237. ISO ‘DAD, *Exode-Deuteronomie*, 183-187.

238. THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA, Hom. X, 12; cf. TONNEAU-DEVREESSE, 265.

239. MATEOS, *L’office doménical*, 263-288; *The Origins*, 482-485; *The Office*, 47.

240. 24:9-11; cf. WILKINSON, *Egeria’s Travels*, 125ff; MATEOS, *La vigile cathédrale*, 303, 307.

241. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 424.

242. MACLEAN, *Offices*, 297, defines it as the “extra hullale sung at the night service on Sundays and festivals after the Mawtba.”

to the spirit of the feast.²⁴³ These specially chosen psalms make this ‘office of the resurrection’ relevant for the feast of the Nativity.

Psalm 2 is messianic in its literal sense as understood and used in both Jewish and Christian tradition.²⁴⁴ The New Testament writers often applied this psalm to our Lord (Acts 4:25–28; 13:33; Rom 1:4; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Rev 11:18; 12:5; 19:15, Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22; 2 Pet 1:17; etc.). The Church, however, wants us to sing this psalm during the liturgy of the feast of the Nativity of Christ mainly because of the prophetic testimony of the divine filiation of Christ, which is seen in its verse 7; ‘The Lord said to me: you are my son, and today I have begotten you.’ According to Athanasius, this is tantamount to saying:

The very (divine) nature declared me Son of the Father; and that, not by a commandment (purely exterior), but by the very Essence, declaring me to be the image of the Being of the Father, It is with reason that it has been added: ‘you are’, which declares the generation before centuries, because the Son has always existed. It is added: ‘today I have begotten you’, to show the generation according to flesh, because this ‘today’ indicates the time; it is also a matter of the temporal generation.²⁴⁵

Verse 7 admits two meanings, therefore: the eternal generation and the temporal generation.²⁴⁶ Although it is the suffering Christ who is revealed in the entire context of *Psalm 2*,²⁴⁷ it is also the birthday of the same risen Lord, alluded to in v. 7, that we are celebrating on the feast of the Nativity.

Psalm 72 is a song in praise of the ideal king with the messianic ideal of universal rule, expressing for the Jews the vocation of Israel through the reign of God’s ‘Anointed’, to bring all mankind to God. For the Christian, this means the universal rule of Christ.

243. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 342; 217*, 267*, 304*; trans. n. 135–137.

244. LANCELLOTTI, *Salmi*, 87; RAVASI, *Salmi* I, 93.

245. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 67–68; ET mine.

246. AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, 5; THEODORET, *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 879.

247. DEVREESSE: *Essai*, 76.

The Church has chosen this psalm for the feast of the Nativity because of verse 15: "Long may he live, may gold of Sheba (dahbā da-Sbā) be given to him."

Ephraem in his *Hymns on the Nativity* makes a very vivid allusion to this verse 15 of the psalm. The virgin mother speaks to the Child:

David your father sang in a psalm of you before you came,
that to you should be given the gold of Sheba.
This psalm which he sang in mere (words),
behold! in reality (it brings) before you in heaps
gold and myrrh!²⁴⁸

Psalm 110 is also messianic and an important christological text, cited more often in the New Testament than any other Old Testament passage (Mt 22:44; 26:44; Mk 12:36; 14:62; Lk 20:43; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:13,20; Col 3:1).

The Patristic tradition sees this as messianic, fulfilled in Christ. For Justin the Martyr, the holy prophetic spirit of this psalm calls Christ 'Lord' (v. 1) and the vv. 3-4 speak of the generation of the Son not from human seed, but from the will of the Father.²⁴⁹ The Church sings this psalm during the feast of the Nativity principally because of v. 3: "With you is glory on the day of power; in the splendour of holiness, from the womb, Child, I have begotten you from the beginning." For the Fathers, the "day of power" is also the day of the incarnation of Christ.²⁵⁰ Iso'dad of Merw sees in it the eternal generation of the Word by the Father from the beginning and beyond time, "the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things" (Eph 3:9), and "a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification" (1 Cor 2:7).²⁵¹ For Ephraem, the very number hundred and ten of the psalm symbolizes Christ's divinity and humanity:

248. HNat. XV, 9; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 82-83.

249. *Dialogus* 32, 544-545: Ibid., 63, 619-620; cf. also IRENEUS, *Demonstratio* XLIX, 109-110; ID., *Adversus Haereses* III, 6, 1, 129.

250. Cf. ORIGEN, *Ex Commentariis*, 1569-1570; ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones*, 462.

251. ISO'DAD, *Commentaire*, 174-175. cf. also VOSTE, *Sur les psaumes*, 294-295.

David your father, in the hundred and tenth psalm,
 twined together two numbers as it were crowns to you,
 and came (to you), O Conqueror!
 With these shall you be crowned!
 and you shall ascend and sit at the right.
 A crown is the great number twined in the hundred,
 with which your divinity is crowned!
 A small crown of the number ten,
 which crowns the head of your humanity, O victorious one.²⁵²

According to the rubric,²⁵³ even if the feast of the Nativity falls on Sunday, we are asked to make *syām burkā* (genuflection) between the above psalms. On Sundays, the day of our Lords' resurrection and therefore of joy, genuflection is not made, of a rule. Then why here on the feast of the Nativity, a feast of great joy, and that, too, despite its occurrence on a Sunday? Ancient tradition justifies this exception: the myrrh which the Magi offered signifies that the saviour who is born will have to suffer. This prior knowledge of Christ's passion and sufferings affects somehow our true joy, it leads us to sadness and pain. The psalms also point to the whole mystery of the divine dispensation (*mdabbrānūtā*) which includes Christ's passion, sufferings and death. We, too, therefore must suffer with him mystically.²⁵⁴

ii. *Oniātā d-Lelya*

After the psalms we have three 'oniātā, each preceded by a prayer, and by verses from the psalms and other Scriptures (*d-Surtā*), and repeated with *sabbah*.

a. The 1st 'onita: Christ's birth: revelation of God's love (trans. n. 139)

The prayer which precedes the 1st 'oniātā²⁵⁵ is the one which concludes the psalms of the *Qale d-Sahrā* and is found in the ordinary.²⁵⁶ The psalm verses which precede are the following:

252. HNat. IX, 5-6; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 64; The verse of this Psalm, for Ephraem, alludes to Christ; *De Beata Maria* XX, 28; cf. LAMY, *Hymni et Sermones* II, 637.

253. BEDJAN *Breviarium* I, 342; trans. n. 138.

254. *Expositio* I, 187. The ancient practice was to prostrate once between the hullale and genuflect once between *marmiata*; cf. MACLEAN, *Offices* 86; See the discussion on this rubric in MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 88, n. 2; 124, n. 1.

255. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 342.

256. *Ibid.*, 26.

Psalm 93:1 : "The Lord reigns and he put on stateliness." We sing this verse to salute Christ the King born today, because "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev 11:15). With the birth of Christ, Satan's rule is ended and the world is redeemed.²⁵⁷

The next two verses, Ps 106:2 (which is treated above, p. 162) and Ps 35:10, and the text from the anaphora of Mar Nestorius: "Because, even if all creatures became one mouth and one tongue, they would not be able to speak of your greatness, O my Lord,"²⁵⁸ point to our inability to grasp the mystery of God's becoming man to save all mankind and the whole world.

The 'onitā, too, expresses the inability of man to render due gratitude and adoration towards God, who out of love has sent his Only begotten Son to save us from death. The day of Christ's birth is the greatest moment in which are realized God's love for man and the salvation offered by him.

b. The 2nd 'onita: Renewal of man's image (trans. n. 142).²⁵⁹

Deut 32:12 : "The Lord alone has reared him up."

This verse is spoken by Moses in his canticle where he narrates the miraculous ways in which God has loved and protected his people. The immediate allusion is to Jacob who was protected and loved by God as his precious heritage: "He (the Lord) encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye... the Lord alone reared him up" (Deut 32:10-14).

Psalm 78:68 : "He has built his sanctuary in the heights." The idea of the construction of the temple projected by David (2 Sam 7:2-3) and realized by Solomon (1 Kings 6) is seen a work directed by God himself as symbolic of the whole cosmos.²⁶⁰ The expression "sanctuary in the heights" points to the transcendence of God. For Christians, the line of David leads finally to Christ, the Son through whom the omnipotent and eternal Father wins over the devil, putting him to eternal shame (ḥesdā

257. ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 407-408.

258. KELAITA, *Liturgy*, 83-84.

259. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 343.

260. RAVASI, *Salmi* II, 651; LANCELOTTI, *Salmi*, 532.

d-‘almā) (v. 5), and establishing His reign both in heaven and on earth.

Gen 1:26-27 : “And God created Adam in his image and likeness.”

The relevance of this verse in our context becomes clear in the light of the theme of the ‘oniṭā.

The ‘oniṭā expounds the doctrine of creation of man in God’s image and likeness, which was disfigured and corrupted by the influence of the devil. God, out of his great love for man, reworked and renewed the same image, and reinstated it in its original beauty by being born man from the womb of the Virgin Mary. The ṣlōṭā²⁶¹ which precedes this ‘oniṭā is proper to the feast and is of thanks, adoration and praise addressed to the Holy Trinity.

c. The 3rd ‘oniṭa: The Kingship of Christ (trans. n. 145)²⁶²

This ‘oniṭā is begun with its proper slotā²⁶³ which is trinitarian, and asks for the help and strength so that we might always fulfil the will of God manifested through his commandments. It is further accompanied by the following verses:

Psalm 99:1 : “The Lord reigns and let the people tremble”.

This introductory verse of Ps 99 proclaims the divine kingship of God, which fills the people with reverential fear. By singing it, the Church proclaims the new manifestation of Christ the King among us.²⁶⁴

Psalm 92: 5 : “How great are, O Lord, your deeds.” God’s deed par excellence is that “God so loved the world that he gave his only son” (Jn 3:6). For Athanasius it is the whole economy of salvation.²⁶⁵ We sing this verse because God manifests himself in Christ through the incomprehensible mystery of incarnation, and this idea is conveyed to the faithful in the liturgy of the feast.

261. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 343; trans. n. 141.

262. BEDJAN; *Breviarium* I, 343.

263. *Ibid.* ; trans. n. 144.

264. ATHANASIUS, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 421-422; JUSTIN, *Dialogus* LXIV, 623-624.

265. *Expositiones in Psalmos*, 403-404.

Heb 11:32 : “Short indeed is the time for me to speak of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the rest of the prophets.”

The Letter to the Hebrew in chapter 11 deals with the enduring faith of the Old Testament patriarchs. Despite hardship, the Israelites stood by God. Their waiting, however, was an eschatological expectation. The above verse tells us that “in these last days he (God) has spoken to us by a Son” (*Heb 1:2*)²⁶⁶

The ‘*oniṭā* extols the kingship of Christ acknowledged by the angels with their singing glory to him, by the star announcing his appearance on earth, by the Magi with their offerings, by the shepherds with their adoration, by the earth with the manger and by Mary from us. Thus the whole creation worships Christ the King.

The ‘*oniātā d-Lelya* are concluded by *Sabbah* which is followed by the strophe²⁶⁷ that invites the kings of the world to adore Christ who is born from the Virgin Mary and who is the Saviour of the whole universe.

The strophe²⁶⁸ that follows ‘*Alam* presents to us the divine maternity of the Virgin Mary through the biblical image of the ewe that carries a young lion (*Gen 49:9*).²⁶⁹

The prayer (Nemar)²⁷⁰ that follows, common to the office of solemnity, though not especially significant for the feast of the Nativity, is christological and asks for the constant guidance of Christ in our lives, because we have placed all our trust in him.

iii. *Qānōnā*

The ‘*oniātā d-Lelya* are followed by the *qānōnā psalms*, begun by a prayer proper to the feast of the Nativity. This prayer,²⁷¹ which is addressed to the holy Trinity, requests the grace of purity of mind and heart to celebrate, with the same spirit of the Magi and the shepherds, the feast of the Nativity of Christ the Lord, source of life.

266. CODY, *Hebrews*, cf. NELSON, 1233–1235.

267. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 343; tans. n. 146.

268. *Ibid.*, 344; trans. n. 147.

269. Cf. YOUSIF, *Marie, Mere du Christ*, 63.

270. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 344; trans. n. 148.

271. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 344; trans. n. 149.

The qānōnā is composed of three psalms, 148, 150 and 116. Ps 148 is divided into two parts, vv. 1–6 and vv. 7–14, the whole thus constituting four units of psalmody in all. Each of these four units has a refrain proper to the feast.²⁷²

According to the rubric,²⁷³ the choir enters the sanctuary before beginning the qānōnā psalms. But actually only one choir enters there and the other remains in the bema. This entrance into the sanctuary seems to be inspired by the beginning of each section of the Ps 148: “praise the Lord from heaven ...” (v. 1) is chanted by those in the sanctuary, the symbol of heaven, and “Praise the Lord from the earth ...” (v. 7) is chanted by those in the bema, the symbol of Jerusalem.²⁷⁴

a. Psalm 148:1–6 Praise from Heaven (trans. n. 150). This is an invitation addressed to the heavenly being by the community at worship to join the celebration of the name of the Lord, the Creator of the universe. Commenting on v. 1 of this psalm, Iso‘dad of Merw says that it is proper that the whole of creation including the heavenly beings praise and glorify its author.²⁷⁵

The refrain speaks of the star in the firmament which is called to be at the service of the child Jesus to make known to the world the birth of the Son of God in fulfilment of the age-old expectations.

b. Psalm 148:7–14 : Praise from the Earth (trans. n. 151.) This section of the psalm invites earthly creation to render praise and glory to God the Creator. Verses 11–12 invite all the categories of men and women in different ages, and also those vested with authority to praise the exalted name of the Lord, because man is the synthesis and kernel of creation.²⁷⁶

The corresponding refrain speaks of the Magi who moved on in search of the Newborn, and says that they “came,” “knelt,” “adored” and “offered gifts” before him, and sang glory to him. This tells us that the Magi could see and believe the Son of God, the Saviour, in the child whom they found in the manger.

272. *Ibid.*, trans. n. 150–153.

273. *Ibid.*, trans. n. 149.

274. Cf. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 127.

275. ISO‘DAD, *Commentaire*, 208.

276. *Ibid.*, 210.

c. **Psalm 150 : "Praise as Sacrifices"** (trans. n. 152.) This is the culmination of pure praise in the psalter. It is the great alleluia, the highest form of spiritual exaltation. It is the music of heaven as St John heard it sung by the angelic choirs before the throne of the Most High: "I heard what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying alleluia; once more they cried alleluia..." (Rev 19:13). St John Chrysostom, commenting on this psalm, says that to praise God uninterruptedly is our sacrifice, our offering, our highest form of ministry, that reproduces in us the life of the angels.²⁷⁷ By singing this psalm, therefore, we join the heavenly beings to praise the work of God who worked out both human and cosmic salvation through Christ the King born in Bethlehem.

The refrain of this psalm speaks again of the star that appeared in the sky and led the Magi to the manger where they saw the newborn child, who is the saviour from the race of David.

d. **Psalm 116 : Salvation for All** (trans. n. 153). This psalm, the shortest of all the psalms, invites all the peoples and nations to praise the Lord. This psalm, therefore, points to the universality of the salvation wrought by God, because the God of all, according to Athanasius, by giving in Christ the promised saviour, has fulfilled the promises and opened for all the fountain of mercy and love, so that all, Jews and gentiles, may in one accord sing glory.²⁷⁸ For Theodoret God's "steadfast love" and "enduring faithfulness" (v. 2.) for us reaches its concrete realization "when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared".²⁷⁹ Therefore, we praise and glorify God with the verses of this psalm for the greatest gift of salvation which we celebrate at this feast of the Nativity of Christ.

In the refrain we ask Christ the Son to accept our vigil, our prayers and our praises, and to grant our requests out of his pity towards us.

The qānōna is concluded by sabbah, followed by a hymn with two strophes.²⁸⁰ The first strophe, proper to the feast, says that when God the Son humiliated himself out of love, taking our human nature, the assemblies of angels in heaven, and with

277. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 498.

278. *Expositiones in psalmos*, 475-476.

279. *Interpretatio in psalmos*, 1807-1808.

280. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 344; trans. n. 154a-154b.

them the earthly beings, render him praise and glory. The second strophe, common, and penitential in nature, begs compassion, mercy and remission of sins.

When this is ended, the verse "Glory to God in the heights" (Lk 2:14)²⁸¹ is sung thrice by the alternative choirs, begun by the one in the sanctuary and repeated by the other in the bema, representing the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem respectively, and again concluded in the sanctuary.

iv. *Hpaktā*

This is truly a hymn of glory (tesboḥtā)²⁸² which speaks of Christ the Child whose birth has become a menace to the tyrant kings. It acknowledges also that it is the divine power itself of Christ that moves the angels and men to sing praises at his birth.

v. *Karozuta*

This 'proclamation' which is proper to the feast of the Nativity has two sections, one dogmatic, the other of supplication.

The dogmatic section²⁸³ deals, through the invocations inspired by the Scripture, with the various aspects of the mystery celebrated on the feast of the Nativity: Christ is eternally born from the Father without beginning and is of the same substance of the Father; he is born in time from the holy virgin; he is eternally Son and consubstantial with God and is born in Bethlehem for the sealing of the prophecies; he is Lord of David through his divinity and son of David through his humanity; he is the wonderful child, prince of peace, mighty God, prophesied by Isaiah (9:6); he is the sun of justice, predicted by Malachi (4:2) and Jeremiah (23:5-6); his birth is praised by the angels and announced by the shepherds and witnessed by Simeon and Anna (Lk 2:25-36); his birth impels the angels to sing glory and to announce peace and hope for mankind; through his birth from Mary he removes the condemnation of Eve and gives salvation to all; he is the second Adam born from Mary, the daughter of Eve, and prepared a room in heaven for the first Adam.

281. *Ibid.*, 345; trans. n. 155.

282. *Ibid.*; trans. n. 156.

283. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 345; trans. n. 157-166.

The second section of the *karōzuṭā*²⁸⁴ consists of general requests for peace, for the material and spiritual welfare of ecclesiastical superiors, and for an edifying and holy life of priests and deacons; then it asks for the constant protection from God who has deigned to save us through his beloved Son; and finally asks Christ to protect his Church and her members everywhere, rendering them worthy to celebrate the feasts of his divine dispensation (*mdabbrānūṭā*).

B. Sapra (Morning prayers)

The Schema of the Propers

Slotā

Mazmōre d-Saprā (The Morning Psalms):

(Pss 100, 91, 104:1–16a, 113, 93;
Pss 148, 150, 116.

‘Oniṭā d-Sapra (10 strophes)

Hymns of light (Nuhrā & Tu ‘yay)

d-Bārek

da-Lbakṭā

Tesboḥtā

Qanddisā Allahā (Trisagion) etc...

1. *Slotā (Prayer)*

We have here two long prayers²⁸⁵ attributed to the Nestorian Patriarch Elia III (d. 1190), whose surname Abu Halim is given to an anthology of prayers; These prayers, composed by Abu Halim (12th century), are of great theological significance, as they contain biblical allusions to the images realized in Mary.²⁸⁶

284. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 345–346; trans. n. 167–173.

285. *Ibid.*, 346–349.

286. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 13, 129. According to Mateos, the first of these prayers is the concluding prayer of the *karoza* of the Qale d-Sahra and the second is the introductory prayer of Sapra; cf. *Lelya-Sapra*, 129, also 66–67 and especially, 66, n. 4. However, at least in some of our manuscripts studied (e.g., Vat. Syr. 83, fol. 24v), both of these prayers are clearly stated to be of Sapra. Besides, the third part of these two prayers is the common conclusion found in the prayers before Mazmore d-Sapra, common to feasts, Sundays and commemorations; cf. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 29. Maclean considers two such long prayers found in the same place in a *Gazza* manuscript of the office for the feast of the Epiphany to be “prayers before Morning Psalms;” cf. *The East Syrian Rite*, 377. We too consider them to be introductory prayers of Sapra.

The first slotā (trans. n. 174) has three parts. The first part expounds the mystery of the incarnation: Christ's eternal birth from the Father; he is the image and icon of the Father; he is born man from the virgin; he assumed the figure of a servant in the natural order; he saved even the material world from subjugation to sin; he makes creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, serve him and praise his divine presence; though he was subject to death, his divinity remains intact: he seals all the prophecies of the Old Testament through his birth; he makes the Magi and the shepherds adore his divinity.

The second part is a prayer for the grace of enlightenment of our hearts, and for divine happiness; for the grace to celebrate the feast worthily in a manner that suits the lordship of Christ, so that we may finally share and enjoy the eternal joy in the heavenly Jerusalem; for the grace to be protected from the sin of pride and arrogance, so that we may with humility extol the birth of Christ and worship the Father.

In the third part we ask for the acceptance of our prayers, intercessions and supplications, and for the remission of the sins of all people, especially of the worshipping community.

The second Slotā (trans. n. 175) is concerned more with the temporal birth of Christ and its consequences. The following are the ideas expressed in it: Christ is born eternally from the Father, and in time from the Virgin Mary without her losing perpetual virginity; he is the one prophesied by the prophets; he is the one praised by the legion of angels; he is the one contemplated by the prophets, seen by the apostles with their material eyes, and preached by them all over the world; he is the one who is proclaimed divine and human at the same time by the Church; he is the one who through his grace and power chose and honoured Mary, the Virgin Mother; he is the one who is born from and brought up by Mary, a pure, holy, chaste, glorious and benevolent virgin, the pride of apostolic glory. Finally we ask for lasting peace, for a holy and prosperous life, for the right guidance towards, and final glory in, the heavenly kingdom.

2. Mazmore d-Sapra (The Morning Psalms)

The Morning Prayer in the East Syrian tradition is a true celebration of light. There the Church celebrates her ardent expectation of the ultimate manifestation of the divine splendour

at the time of the second coming of the Lord.²⁸⁷ The whole celebration is "oriented towards the action of grace for the gift of the light and towards the adoration of Christ the true Light."²⁸⁸

The Morning Psalms for the feast of the Nativity are the same fixed psalms as those of the Sundays and dominical feasts for the whole year:²⁸⁹ Pss 100, 91, 104:1–16a, 113, 93, 148, 150 and 116 (Ps 149 is said only on commemorations and week days). Each of these psalms except the last three has its own refrain. Pss 100 and 91 are accompanied by *sabbah* and *'alam*. Pss 104:1–16a and 113 have one *sabbah* and *'alam*, whereas Pss 93 with *farcing*, and 148, 150 and 116 without *farcing*, are all sung under one *sabbah* and *'alam*.

The first five psalms are also found in the Jewish tradition, but in the following order: Pss 91, 100, 104 (partly), 113:2–4, 93. According to the East Syrian liturgical usage, the last three, Pss 148, 150 and 116, form often a group.²⁹⁰

Except for Ps 91, all the other psalms have either the theme of thanking and praising or of light and sunrise. The use of Ps 91 in the *Sapra* is an East Syrian peculiarity based, as we mentioned above, on the Jewish tradition, whereas this psalm is of compline and sext in the tradition of St Basil (PG 31, 1013–1016) and consequently in the traditions dependent on it. This psalm speaks of the protective presence of God all through the day and night (vv. 5–6).²⁹¹

Psalm 100 has two special refrains proper to the feast of the Nativity, known by this incipit *b-rasit* (in the beginning),²⁹² with which also Sacred Scripture begins (Gen 1:1). The *first* of these refrains speaks of the creation of light by God who is the Lord of light and the Giver of light, while the *second* refers to the eternal existence of the Word with God (Jn 1:1) and to the manifestation of the Word of God in the world becoming

287. DALMAIS, *Lumiere*, 262; TAFT, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, 233.

288. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 415; cf. also *L'office paroissial*, 70ff.

289. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 29–33. For the ET of the prayers, refrains and rubrics of these psalms, cf. MACLEAN, *East Syrian Rite*, 379–381.

290. YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica (appunti)*, 33.

291. YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica (appunti)*, 33; TAFT, *Liturgy of the Hours*, 233.

292. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 349; trans. n. 176a, 177a.

man. It also speaks of the fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophecies in the child born in Bethlehem and proclaimed by the angels, and says that the birth of Christ evokes praise and adoration from all over the world, because sin and death are conquered through his birth, and we are enlightened by the true knowledge and faith.

All the other refrains,²⁹³ common to Sundays and feasts, treat the theme of the creation of light in the beginning by God. At this the angels marvelled and praised God, and they lead us to praise Christ, the Light who is born today to save the whole world from the thralldom of darkness of sin and death.

3. 'Onita d – Sapra (Morning Antiphon)

After the mazmōre d-Sapra follows the 'onita d-Saprā, the principal hymn sung on Sundays and feasts during the morning office.²⁹⁴ This consists of 10 strophes, intercalated between the verses of Ps 100, a psalm of praise as we have already seen, and concluded with sabbah and 'alam. The main themes expounded in them are the following: Christ's birth brings peace, hope and joy to the whole world; both heaven and earth are equally happy at his birth, and angels and men rejoice and praise him; Christ who is born is the new Sun; he is the wonderful Child, the Hero, the Prince, so named by (Isaiah 9:6); his birth is in fulfilment of the prophecies: this is a great feast for the Church. Finally, it asks for a blessing on the congregation that celebrates the feast.

The 'Onitā d- Saprā is followed by an actual morning hymn of praise common to Sundays, feasts and commemorations.²⁹⁵ It insists on the need of the morning praise: because God is the Creator of all. It asks also for the Lord's protection throughout the day, and for the reign of peace and love in the whole world and for the healing of the sick and the forgiveness of the sins of all.

4. Hymns of light

There are two hymns of light common to Sundays, feasts and commemorations.²⁹⁶ The first, 'Nuhrā' of St Ephraem, has

293. *Ibid.*, trans. n. 178–180.

294. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 349–350; trans. n. 181–191a.

295. *Ibid.*, 34–45; trans. n. 192.

296. *Ibid.*, 35–36. Cf. also p. 231 below.

this theme: Christ is the true light of the world; we are already in the light, the full manifestation of which we wait for on the day of his parousia. The second, 'Tuyay' of Mar Narsai, is of rich eschatological meaning: through the first coming of Christ, his manifestation among men, the true light is come in this world; it is necessary to keep this light alive in us through faith and good works which it arouses; it is necessary to remain vigilant in the expectation of the full light which will shine on the second coming of Christ.

5. d-Barek

This hymn²⁹⁷ offers adoration to the Child Jesus calling back to memory the adoration and gifts offered by the Magi, and prays for the abundance of peace for all nations, and finally renders glory to the Father in heaven.

After the first strophe of this hymn follows the 'Benedicite' (the hymn of the three children, inspired by Dan 3:23) from the ordinary of Sundays, feasts and commemorations.²⁹⁸

6. da-Lbakta

The Syriac word means a chant. This is inserted between d-Bārek and Tesbohtā, an addition proper to certain feasts.²⁹⁹ The main theme of this chant is the arrival of kings from different parts of the world like Persia, India, China, Arabia at the grotto of the Child Jesus to offer him adoration and gifts. Thus it points to the kingship of Christ above all other earthly kings and says that the day of Christ's birth is a great feast day all over the world in praise of God who sent him.

7. Tesbohta

After the priest's prayer³⁰⁰ is begun this hymn which has three strophes,³⁰¹ the first of which speaks of the star that guided the Magi in their search of the Newborn, and invites us today to adore the Child. The second strophe alludes to Daniel's vision of the image of the stone not hewn by human hand (2:34), and

297. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 350: trans. n. 193a.

298. *Ibid.*, 36-37. For an ET of this hymn, cf. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 376-378, N. 367-384.

299. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 350; trans. n. 194a.

300. BEDJAN *Breviarium* I, 37.

301. *Ibid.*, 350; trans. n. 195.

to its realization in the birth of Christ from Virgin Mary through God's intervention. And finally, the third strophe requests the grace of reconciliation between priests and kings, and the stability of the Church.

8. Qaⁿddīsa Allaha (Trisagion)³⁰²

After the priest's prayer³⁰³ this 'thrice holy' hymn is sung with its solemn melody proper to the great feasts. Then follows the final Our Father with its qānōnā, which becomes the beginning Our Father of the Mass.

[With the usual rite of conclusion,³⁰⁴ Sapra comes to an end].

III. Taksa d-Raze (The Order of Mysteries)

The celebration of the Eucharist (Qurbānā) is the concluding function of the feast of the Nativity. In this section we comment only on what is proper to the Nativity Mass.

The Schema of the Propers

Marmiṭā d-Rāze: Pss 96, 97 and 98

Aqqaptā

'Oniṭā d-Qanke

Reading from the Old Testament:

(1st: Is 7:10-16; 9:1-3. 6-7
2nd: Mic 4:1-3; 5:2-5, 7-9

Surrāyā

Reading from the New Testament: The Apostle: Gal 3:15-4:7

Zummārā

Reading from the New Testament: The Gospel: Lk 2:1-20

'Oniṭā d-Rāze

D' hil-A (n) t

'Oniāṭā d-Bem

Pagrāk wa-Dmāk

Tesbohtā: Hayyel Māran

302. *Ibid.*, 9; trans. n. 196.

303. *Ibid.*, 38.

304. *Ibid.*, 38-39. For the ET of these common concluding prayers of Sapra, cf. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 380-381, N. 392-398.

1. *Marmiṭā d-Rāze* (Psalms for the Qurbānā)

For the opening *marmiṭā* of the Eucharistic celebration, Pss 96, 97 and 98 are prescribed.³⁰⁵ We have already seen the relevance of these psalms in the celebration of the feast of the Nativity (see above 156-158).

2. *Aqqaptā*

According to the rubrics, the verse, "I will thank you in the great assembly" (ps 35:18), is sung as 'rejoinder' (*aqqaptā*)³⁰⁶ with the *marmiṭā* on all feasts of our Lord. With this verse the community at worship confesses and proclaims its faith in the Lord. The word 'assembly', as is expressed also in v. 2 of the same psalm, means the coming together of all people, as commanded by God himself (Lev 8:3).

3. 'Oniṭā d-Qānke (Anthem of the Chancel)

This hymn³⁰⁷ is sung with the following verses:

Psalm 110: 3 : "From the beginning I have begotten you." We have already treated in detail the messianic nature of this psalm and its relevance for the feast of the Nativity (see above 177-178).

Psalm 72:17 : "And before the sun is his name."

This verse refers to the eternal kingship of God and his sovereignty. Even before the creation of the world, the mystery of Christ existed eternally though it was kept secret for ages (Rom 16:25).³⁰⁸

Eph 3:9 : "He who was hidden for ages, in God who created all."

This verse too reinforces the transcendence of the mystery of the incarnation.

The 'oniṭā takes up the same theme of the eternal birth of the Son of God, whose birth in the flesh does not affect his dignity in heaven.

305. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 35; trans. n. 197; cf. also *Supplementum mysteriorum*, 10. The same psalms are prescribed for every Mass until Lent, except on Commemorations.

306. BEDJAN I, 351; trans. n. 198.

307. *Ibid.* ; trans. n. 199. For more on this term in Chaldean and Malabar tradition, cf. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 154.

308. Cf. THEODORET *Interpretatio in psalmos* 1439-1440

The strophe that follows the sabbah, as almost always, praises the power of the cross through which Christ realizes the communion between heaven and earth, namely the establishment of one worshipping community, the Church, because at the birth of Christ both angels and men rejoice and give thanks and praise to God.³⁰⁹

4. Reading from the Old Testament

Though Bedjan does not mention here the readings from Sacred Scripture, as they exist in separate books, the manuscripts studied and the liturgical calendars (see above 130, Table II) prescribe four readings during the divine Liturgy of the Eucharist. All these readings treat either the birth of Jesus or the effects of his birth. We analyse them in the order in which they are read during the Liturgy.

Isaiah 7:10-16; 9:1-3, 6-7 : The first section of this reading (Is 7:10-16) is the prophecy of Emmanuel. St Mathew cites this prophecy in reference to Christ's birth from the virgin (Mt 1:23; cf also Lk 1:35). This prophecy is complemented by Is 9:6-7, which describes the birth of a marvellous child who is identified with Emmanuel (cf. Is 7:14). The solemnity with which the birth is described refers exclusively to the Messiah who is to be born.³¹⁰ In the patristic exegetical tradition, these passages are interpreted messianically as early as Ireneus.³¹¹ Ephream, speaking of Christ who is born in Bethlehem, alludes to this prophecy of Isaiah and unites the two texts:

The virgin has today given birth to Emmanuel in Bethlehem,
the word that Isaiah spoke has been realized today;...
Today was born the Child, and
he was given the name 'wonder' (Is 7:14; 9:6).³¹²

For Iso'dad of Merw, they are directly messianic. Commenting on Is 7:14 he writes:

This will be for you a sign of my entire providence held
for your race since beginning: from a virgin will be born
without marriage he who is to become the dwelling place

309. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 351; trans. n. 200.

310. PENNA, *Isaiah*, cf. NELSON, 576-577.

311. *Adversus haereses* III, 16, 2; cf. SC 34, 280.

312. HNat. 1, 2 & 9; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 1-2.

for the divine nature, and he will show in himself that our God is with us (Mt 1:23).³¹³

Micah 4:1-3; 5:2-5, 7-9 : The first part of this reading (4:1-3) speaks of the final enthronement of the God of Israel on Mount Sion, from which he will dispense knowledge and peace. All nations of the world will turn to him for guidance. For Christians, this points to the heavenly Jerusalem where Christ has been established as king (Rev 14:1).

In the second part (Mic 5:2-5, 7-9), V. 2 makes mention of Bethlehem. The Evangelists see in this verse a clear statement concerning the birth-place of the Messiah (Mt 2:6; Jn 7:42). For Ephraem too, it is nothing else.

He writes:

The word that Micah once spoke,
today has happened indeed !
For there came from Ephrata a shepherd,
and his staff swayed over souls.³¹⁴

Verse 3 is understood in the light of Is 7:14 as referring to Mary, Mother of the Messiah and Mother of the Church, who gives birth to the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6).³¹⁵

5. Surraya

This is sung in between the readings from the Old Testament and the epistle.³¹⁶ Psalm 87:5-6 is sung with the strophe, 'Let us honour the birth of Christ with the Odes of the Spirit, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.' Then the response (punaya)³¹⁷ is sung by the second choir with Ps 87:6b-7, "Birth of Christ," sabbah, "Birth of Christ." We have already explained the relevance of Ps 87 (see above 136-137).

6. Reading from the New Testament: The Apostle

Galatians 3:15-4:7 : Two main themes are expounded in this passage: first, the blessings of Abraham are inherited only through an unchanging promise (3:15-29). The promise of the possession of the land of Canaan symbolizes the promise of the

313. *Isaie*, 16.

314. HNat. I, 4; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 1.

315. RYAN, *Micah*, cf. NELSON, 710-711.

316. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 351; trans. n. 201,

317. *Ibid.*; trans. n. 202-203.

heavenly kingdom. No law could change or modify God's free promise. It is faith in Christ that makes us sons of God. One who believes in Christ, the true seed of Abraham, is also the true seed of Abraham and true heir to the promise.³¹⁸ Secondly, the preexistence of the Son and his birth, taking flesh from a woman at a time appointed by God (4:1-7), 'because the time had arrived that we should now come to the perfection and be without death and suffering and corruption.'³¹⁹ Paul speaks here also of Christ's subjection to the Mosaic Law. Once we have received in Christ the Spirit of adoption, we are entitled to call God 'Father'. This sonship given to us by the Holy Spirit makes us heirs of God's kingdom, and this basic conviction is the core of the faith of the early Christian community. Now at the feast of the Nativity of Christ, we too are celebrating the mystery of our own sonship of the Father in Christ.

7. Zummara

The Zummārā³²⁰ comes in between the Epistle and the Gospel. The verses of Ps 2 are chosen here; they are proper to the feast of the Nativity as we have already seen (see above 176). The Surrāyā and Zummārā, in the context of the solemn celebration of the liturgy, are the immediate response of the community at worship to the Word of God proclaimed through the readings from the Scripture. They proclaim symbolically the acceptance of the message given to the worshipping community and its concrete realization here and now in the celebration of the particular mystery of God's divine dispensation (mdabbrānūtā).

8. Reading from the New Testament: The Gospel

Luke 2:1-20 : This reading, which recounts the birth of Christ, can be subdivided into three sections: Christ's birth itself, vv. 1-7; the angel's announcement of it to the shepherds, vv. 8-14; the shepherds' homage to the Christ Child, vv. 15-20.³²¹

The first section (vv. 1-7) presents to us the setting for the birth. The birth took place in Bethlehem, the home town of

318. ORCHARD, *Galatians* cf. NELSON, 1178-1179.

319. ISO' DAD, *Commentaries* cf. GIBSON (ed.), *Horae Semiticae* X, 94 (ET 62).

320. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 351; trans. n. 204.

321. BROWN, *The Birth*, 410; BAILY, *The Shepherds*, 5. For some of the ideas in the analysis of this reading, I am indebted to these two works.

Joseph, because Joseph and Mary had come there to register in the census ordered by Augustus. Ephraem sees in this order of Augustus the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy: "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs" (Gen 49: 10).³²² This view is shared also by Iso'dad of Merw, who further says:

"By this general census, every one should be aware of the birth of Messiah. For this was also a custom with that Ruler of all that he should establish the universality of all his admirable administration, a concourse of many people, either in the Old Testament or in the New."³²³

It is in referring to his descent from David that Luke sheds light on Christ's messianic dignity (cf. 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 11), and Bethlehem, the birthplace, becomes significant because it highlights Jesus' descent from David the Bethlehemite, of whose and lineage Joseph was (Lk 2:4).

The second section (vv. 8-14) makes clear that the child placed in the manger appears as a shepherd's child. The most important revelation concerning the child can be seen in the message of the angel (vv. 10-12): "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and laying in a manger." What was spoken of in vv. 1-7, the child's birth in Bethlehem and the placing in a manger, stands out in this message: the Davidic descent of the child through the birth "in the city of David" and the condition of the child in a manger as a sign to the shepherds to recognize him who is the Christ, the Lord and Saviour expected by the Israelites, in the condition of a shepherd's child. Iso'dad of Merw sees the confirmation of this truth, and of the good news of great joy (v. 10), when "the spiritual beings fittingly call out and give praise" (vv. 13-14), because "glory is a theory of the adoration of one God, and rejection of demons, and idols and their sacrifices"³²⁴. For Ephraem,

322. *Diatessaron* II, 12; cf. SC 121. 72.

323. *Commentaries*, cf. *Horae Semiticae* VII, 15 (ET, *Horae Semiticae*, V, 155.)

324. *Commentaries*, cf. *Horae Semiticae* VII. 19 (ET *Horae Semiticae* V, 158).

the angel announces "peace on earth (v. 14) because the divinity descended on the earth and put on the humanity."³²⁵

The third section (vv. 15–20) is a description of the shepherds' visit to Bethlehem "to see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (v. 15). They saw Mary and Joseph "and the babe lying in the manger" (v. 16), and then they shed light upon the whole situation by making known "the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (vv. 17–19). Iso'dad of Merw describes "all these things" that Mary reflected in her heart: "the leaping of the babe in the womb, the revelation to Joseph, the prophecies to Zachariah and Elizabeth, the annunciation of the Angel to herself, the conception without union, the birth without pangs, and without destruction of virginity, the coming of the shepherds and of the Magi, etc., which she compared with one another, and marvelled at, and considered how a great and new dispensation was being administered."³²⁶ Finally, the shepherds returned, "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (v. 20).

In short, the Gospel reading proclaims that Christ the Child who is born in Bethlehem from Virgin Mary is the Son of God and the Davidic Messiah who is the Lord and the Saviour of all.

9. Onita d-Raze (Anthem of the Mysteries)

The psalm verses that accompany this hymn, 149:1; 24:1; 48:2, and the verses Lk 2:9, need no special explanation as they all express the same theme of joy all over the world today at the birth of Christ, because everything is renewed in Christ. The verse of Lk 2:9 is taken from the very context of the angel's annunciation of the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

The same theme of joy of the whole universe at the birth of the Onlybegotten Son of God, whose power is made known to all and has revealed its climax in his glorious ascension, is expressed in the 'onitā.³²⁷ It acknowledges that the one who is born

325. *Diatessaron* II, 12; cf. SC 121; 73.

326. *Commentaries*; cf. *Horae Semiticae* VII, 19–20 (ET, *Horae Semiticae* V, 158).

327. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 352; tans. n. 205.

man is the Son of God. All the powers of the world admit the establishment of true peace and tranquillity through the appearance of the Son of God in the world.

The rubrics that follow prescribe for the Mass the Nicene Creed³²⁸ and the second Anaphora, namely the Anaphora of Theodore of Mopsuestia, which is to be used from the Annunciation to Palm Sunday.

10. D'hil-A(n)t

This hymn,³²⁹ which consists of Bate (stanzas) and Aqqpate (additions), is always begun by the qānōnā 'D'ihil-A(n)t' which means 'awful are you'. The rubrics say that after the recitation of the One Holy Father, the sanctuary is veiled, symbolizing the awful presence of the Lord within, and the choir inside the veiled sanctuary begins this hymn, first in a low voice and then loudly, and the choir outside the sanctuary then takes it up. This qānōnā' composed of Ps 68:35 and Ezek 3:12, instills a reverential fear towards the divine mysteries, and thereby prepares the community to receive them with love and respect. It is repeated with each strophe of Bāte and Aqqpatā.

Bātē,³³⁰ sung from the chancel of the sanctuary, are composed of Pss 2:7 and 45:8-9 together with 'alleluia'. The first stanza, as we have already seen, is the messianic prophecy through which God the Father declares the Child born in Bethlehem as the Son of God; this is the mystery we celebrate at the feast of the Nativity. The second stanza is made up of ideas taken from Ps 45:8-9. According to the interpretation of Origen, the "ivory palaces" mentioned in the stanza are churches founded by Christ.³³¹ On the whole, the Ps 45 is understood in a messianic sense, as it looks forward to the messianic fulfilment begun with Christ. For Iso'dad of Merw this celebrates the king and his union with the Church.³³²

328. *Ibid.*; trans n. 206-208. Bedjan has made slight changes in the original text of this Creed; cf. YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica*, 34-35 (Italian translation).

329. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 352; trans. n. 209; cf. also PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 159.

330. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 352; trans. n. 210, 211, 212.

331. *Ex commentariis*, 1465-1466.

332. *Commentaire*, xv, 80-81.

*Aqqpaṭā*³³³ that follows the *Bāṭe*, evokes the vision of Isaiah 6:6, who saw the angel taking the coal with pincers, and sees in it the symbolism of the Eucharistic bread in the hands of the priest. It invites the community to approach the divine mysteries of Christ's body and blood with purity of body and soul, to obtain the remission of sins.

11. 'Oniata d-Bem

This communion hymn³³⁴ has two strophes, the last of which is the second strophe of the *Aqqpaṭā* just spoken above. The first strophe speaks of the sacrificial body and blood of Christ offered on the altar, and of their acceptance by God the Father in heaven.

Bāṭē (stanzas):³³⁵ The first stanza is the Emmanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. The last strophe of the above *Aqqpaṭā* is also repeated here. The second stanza is on the fulfilment of this Emmanuel prophecy: the good news announced by the angel (Lk 2:11). Thus the worshipping community that celebrates the feast of the Nativity is again reminded of the essential message of the feast: the Child who is born in Bethlehem and who is the descendant of David is the Saviour, Christ the Lord promised by God the Father.

12. Pagrak wa-Dmak (Your Body and Blood)

This refrain is an admiration of Christ who gave his own body and blood as food and drink for our spiritual nourishment,³³⁶ and the community that partakes of these mysteries is obliged to render unending praise to him. This hymn is repeated again with *Lbaktā* (see above 189).

The *Bāṭe* (stanzas) that follow³³⁷ express the wonderful grace given to us through the eucharistic mysteries, the perennial memorial of Christ's self-sacrifice. They also acknowledge the great joy given to us through the birth of the Lord, and move hearts to praise the Father for the gratuitous gift of his Son, who brought peace and tranquillity both in heaven and on earth.

333. BEDJAN, *Breviarium*, I, 352; trans. n. 213.

334. *Ibid.*; trans. n. 214, 215.

335. *Ibid.*, 352-353; trans. n. 216, 217, 218.

336. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 353; trans. n. 219.

337. *Ibid.*; trans. n. 220-223a.

13. **Tesbohta: Hayyel Maran** (Strengthen, O our Lord)

This thanksgiving prayer³³⁸ followed by another similar prayer (*Māran 'Iso*: O our Lord Jesus),³³⁹ is said on all feasts of our Lord. How the whole person is involved in the divine worship is illustrated in this prayer. The function of the eucharistic mysteries as the powerful medicine of forgiveness is acknowledged. After narrating the function of each member of the human body in divine worship, it asks the Lord to protect them in purity and holiness, so that they may be privileged to perform the same worship finally in the heavenly kingdom.

When the *Tesbohtā* is over there follow the usual concluding prayers of the Eucharistic Liturgy,³⁴⁰ and thus the celebration of the feast of the Nativity comes to an end.

338. *Ibid.*; 353, 346*; trans. n. 224. For a detailed analysis of this prayer and its significance in the Chaldean and Malabar tradition, cf, PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 161-163.

339. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 353, 346*; trans. n. 225.

340. *Ibid.*, 353; trans. n. 226-227

EXCURSUS

The Liturgical Celebration of the Feast of the Nativity in Malabar Before and After the Synod of Diamper

I. Before Diamper

The clearest and earliest evidence for the existence of the East Syrian Liturgy in Malabar is the Codex Vatican Syriac 22, copied in Kodungaloor, Kerala, in 1301, for the use of the Malabar Church (see above 132). This Syriac Manuscript contains the division of the liturgical year followed by the East Syrian Church. A later 16th century manuscript, *Cambridge Oo.* 1. 17¹ further supports the evidence for the East Syrian liturgy in Malabar, as this Ms is of Malabar origin, containing readings from the Gospel and Epistles.² Although we have no clear evidence as to when and how the East Syrian liturgy was introduced in Malabar, we have enough indications about the relationship that existed between the East Syrian Church and the Malabar Church at least from 3rd century on.³

a. The Beginnings of Latinization

It is in the 16th century that we see the beginnings of the latinization of the Malabar liturgy then in use. The Chaldean Prelates in Malabar, especially Mar Jacob (1503–1532), Mar Joseph Sulaqa (d. 1569) and Mar Abraham (d. 1597), under the pressure of Portuguese missionaries, introduced certain changes based on Latin norms, into the Liturgy of the Thoms Christians. It was Mar Jacob who introduced the Latin form of the sacrament of penance in Malabar, and for that he translated from Latin into Syriac the text of the absolution formula. Unleavened bread was

1. WRIGHT-COOK, *Catalogue* II, 1063–1078.

2. MACOMBER, *Lectionary System*, 492.

3. ASSEMANI, *BO* III, 1, 346; BAR HEBRAEUS, *Chronicon* II, 172; FERROLI, *Jesuits* I, 78; GIAMIL, *Genninae relationes*, 579ff.; MUNDADAN, *Origins*, 28; THAZHATH, *Sources*, 68–72. For more details on this subject, cf. TISSERANT, *Eastern Christianity*; PODIPARA, *Thomas Christians*; PERUMALIL, *Christianity*.

introduced for the Eucharistic celebration.⁴ Mar Joseph followed the Latin use in the administration of the sacraments of penance, confirmation and anointing of the sick. Roman liturgical vestments were also introduced by him. Alterations and modifications were also made in the Pontifical, Missal and Breviary.⁵ Mar Abraham had to forbid Holy Communion under two species. He also had to accede to many "corrections" and additions to the original Missal and Breviary, though he stood firm in maintaining the Syriac language.⁶

b. The feast of the Nativity before the Synod

It is clear from the Acts of the Synod of Diamper in 1599 that there existed in Malabar the celebration of the feast of the Nativity on December 25, and that, even before the synod, there was, among the Thomas Christians, the custom of fasting from December 1 until the eve of the Nativity in spiritual preparation for the feast.⁷ Since the Breviary remained in the original with fewer corrections by Mar Abraham,⁸ we can conclude that, before the synod of Diamper, the feast of the Nativity must have been celebrated in Malabar according to the East syrian liturgical tradition.

II. After Diamper

It is in the Synod of Diamper, convoked by the Archbishop Menezes of Goa, in 1599, that we see the climax of the latinization of the liturgy of the Thomas Christians in Malabar.⁹ In the Act VIII, decree 21 of this synod we read the instruction to celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Christ with the greatest solemnity possible:

4. SCHURHAMMER, *Malabar Church*, 27, n. 67b; THAZHATH, *Sources*, 114-115.

5. FERROLI, *Jesuits I*, 153; THEKKEDATH, *History II*, 43.

6. WICKI, *Documenta Indica XI*, 826-829; THAZHATH, *Sources*, 117-118.

7. Act VIII, decrees 9 & 10; cf. RAULIN, *Historia Malabaricae*, 223-225.

8. THAZHATH, *Sources*, 117.

9. For the detailed discussion on this synod, cf. GOUVEA, *Jornada*; GEDDES, *History*; GLEN, *Histoire*; ASSEMANI, BO III, 2, cccxl-cccvi; RAULIN, *Historia Malabaricae*; WHITEHOUSE, *Lingerings*; GERMANN, *Die Kirche*; CONNOLLY, *Work of Menezes*; THALIATH, *Synod of Diamper*.

Whereas it is necessary that the feast of Christ's Nativity be celebrated with great solemnity and uniformity throughout the whole Catholic Church, the Syond commands that on the eve of that festivity, all the clergy and people assemble together in the church, there to say Matins with the greatest solemnity possible; and that after they have done these prayers, which shall end about midnight, they shall make the customary procession, which being over, a solemn Mass shall be said with all possible festivity, after which the Priest may say a Mass at break of day, and a third at the usual time of Mass; for the Priests must know, that for the greater solemnity of this festival, they are permitted to say three Masses upon it, that is, one at midnight, one at break of day, and a third at the ordinary time; or in the case of private Masses, all three together after break of day; but if public, all shall be said in the aforementioned order...¹⁰

From this legislation we can deduce two important things: first, until the synod of Diamper in 1599 there was no custom in the Malabar Church of a priest saying three Masses on the feast of the Nativity; second, there existed a solemn procession at the end of the Morning Office which was followed by the solemn celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

a. Three Masses: a Roman practice

Saying three Masses on the feast of the Nativity is purely Roman in origin. In Rome, originally, there was only one Mass, but that was the actual third Mass of the day, celebrated in St Peter's basilica, and not the Midnight Mass as one is prone to think. The Midnight Mass and the mass at daybreak are of later origin. The one at midnight was introduced after 431 and celebrated in the basilica of St Mary Major. The daybreak Mass, said in the church of St Anastasia towards 800, was introduced towards 400 and originally was celebrated in St Peter's basilica.¹¹ It was this Latin custom which the synod of Diamper introduced in the

10. RAULIN, *Historia Malabaricae*, 234-235; ET adapted from GEDDES, *History*, 363-364.

11. VEYS, *Trois Messes*, 292-300; BONACCORSI, *Il Natale*, 73-76; GASTOUE, *Noel*, 35-38.

Malabar Church, where it remains until present day, though it is not observed today with the same enthusiasm.

b. The Ceremony of Light

With regard to the "customary procession" which the synod leaves intact, we do not know much about the nature of its actual performance at that epoch. However, we do have clear evidence of the existence, among the Thomas Christians in Malabar, of a ceremony of light, popularly called 'ceremony of fire', accompanied by a procession on the eve of the feast of the Nativity before the synod of Diamper in 1599. Antonio Monserrate S. J., a Spanish missionary who worked in Malabar in the 16th century, has given us some details of such a ceremony: a solemn vigil was conducted on the eve of feast of the Nativity, and it was followed by the Midnight Mass and no other. During this vigil on the eve, they blessed a bonfire of dry wood and walked around it in procession.¹² It is possible, therefore, that it is this ceremony of light with the accompanying procession what is intended by the "customary procession" in the decree of synod of Diamper cited above.

Later, this age-old ceremony of light on the eve of the feast of the Nativity was misjudged to be a superstitious practice by Archbishop Bernardine Bacinelli who governed the Thomas Christians between 1853-1868. He made legislation to prohibit this ceremony of light on the eve of the feast of the Nativity. He writes:

we have heard that there occurs in certain churches a ceremony with prayers and lighting of fire on the eve of the feast of the Nativity to commemorate the appearance of God to Moses in the burning bush. Such a ceremony is schismatic and Jewish and never found in any service of the holy Catholic Church, either in the old rubrics or in the new. Therefore the above noted lighting is severely prohibited. Priests and laity who act against this order shall ipso facto fall into suspension and interdict which we alone can absolve. This matter should be repeatedly announced in the churches. It is for you to remove this

12. MONSERRATE, *Informacion*, f. 149v; cf. WICKI, *Documenta Indica* III, 805; MUNDADAN, *History* I, 211; THAZHATH, *Sources*, 60.

ceremony. Instruct the people by providing matter for meditation such as that on the night of the feast of the Nativity the Father deigned to give his Only begotten Son who put on flesh in the pure womb of the immaculate mother for our sins, by various sufferings and shedding of his blood and other spiritual considerations¹³

This prohibition, however, did not have much effect on the meaningful and traditional ceremony, as we still see it conducted in some of the churches of the Thomas Christians on the eve of the feast of the Nativity even to this day. There exists such a solemn ceremony of light on the eve of the feast also in the Church of the East (Nestorians) in Trichur even today.¹⁴

In the *Methodus Officiorum pro diebus festivis collecta* (in Syriac), edited by Rev. P. Andrea Kalapura, originally printed in 1909 and reedited in 1926 (Puthempally, Kerala) we find the text used for this ceremony of light, although we do not know anything about the original source of this text. But in spite of certain Western elements such as the statue of Baby Jesus, all the prayers and hymns therein are according to the East Syrian tradition. The service is that of Ramsa with the evening psalms omitted. The 'Oniātā d-Bāsāliqe are exactly the same as those of Ramsa for the feast of the Nativity in the Breviary edited by Darmo. Of the seventeen strophes, fourteen are found in Bedjan (see above, 35-37, trans. n. 27a-40). We give here a very brief description of the ceremony as given in the *Methodus Officiorum* mentioned above:

After the 'oniātā d-Bātar, the priest announces in loud voice: "For behold, I announce to you great joy which will be for all the people," The people respond: "for to you is born today the Saviour who is the Lord Christ" (Lk 2:10, 11).

Priest: Let us go to Bethlehem

People: Let us see the Word (Lk 2:15)

Then the priest, drawing the sanctuary veil, enters the sanctuary and incenses thrice the statue of the Baby Jesus and pays homage,

13. VALERIAN, *Chavara*, 411; ET adapted from PADINJAREKANJIRATHINKAL, *Canonical Reforms*, 300-301; cf. also THAZHATH, *Sources*, 218.

14. For this information, I am indebted to Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of the Church of the East, Trichur.

singing thrice: 'Lord, we adore your divinity and humanity without hesitation.' When this is over, priest and the people go with candles to before the main door of the church, where firewood is prepared in a triangular form with three oil lamps set on the three angles. The priest, then, facing the church, sings in a loud voice: "Glory to God in the heights." The people respond: "And on earth peace and tranquillity and good hope to men" (Lk 2:14). The priest, while singing the above hymn thrice, lights all the three oil lamps. Then the priest and the people say together the Lord's Prayer. After this:

Deacon ... Let us pray. Peace be with us.

Priest : May your divinity, O my Lord,... (see above, 34-35, trans. n. 26).

When this prayer is over, the priest throws incense into the fire, saying: "Lord, let this incense which you have blessed rise up before you and let your mercy descend on us." Then all those who are present cast into the fire the incense they have brought with them. Now begins the procession, walking thrice around the fire, singing the 'oniātā d-Bāsāliqe. Finally, after going around the church with lighted candles, all enter the church. The ceremony concludes with the singing of the 'Onitā d-Bem (see above, 37-38, trans. n. 43, 44a and 44b), repeating the first strophe after each stanza.

The fire set in triangular form with the three oil lamps symbolizes the Trinity. Further, we know many instances in the Old Testament where the element of light was present in the great theophanies. The appearance of Jahweh to Moses on Mount Horeb was in a flame of fire in the bush (Exod 3:2-6); on Mount Sinai, God again appeared to him in the form of fire (Exod 19:18-20); God went before the Israelites in the desert as a pillar of fire (Exod 13:21-22). In the New Testament, God's glory was manifested when Jesus was transfigured, enveloped in resplendent light (Mk 9:1-11). In like manner, at the Nativity of Christ in the world, the splendour of the glory of God shone upon the world in the form of light and illumined the night (Lk 2:9-11). Thus, in the Son of God who became man, "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Mt 4:16).

This ceremony of light, a traditional part of the celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ among the Thomas Christians, had a very deep theological significance for proclaiming Christ as the Light of the world. It helped the participants imbibe that message of light, in order to enlighten their own personal lives in the light of Christ's salvific mystery of the incarnation. It is sad to note that this ceremony, replete with rich and meaningful symbolism suited to the spirit of the feast of the Nativity of Christ, has disappeared from the majority of the churches in Malabar. This celebration of light was never superstitious fire worship, as the Latin bishops and missionaries thought. On the contrary, it was a ritual celebration of Christ the Light through the natural symbolism of light produced from fire. It would, therefore, be suitable for the authorities of the Malabar Church to revive this ageold, meaningful ceremony of light and include it in the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity.¹⁵ Thereby they would be making no new addition to the celebration, but restoring the lost richness of the celebration of the feast of the Nativity.

15. Dr Jacob Vellian has recently prepared a text for this ceremony of light to be used for the feast of the Nativity; cf. VELLIAN, *Ceremony of Fire*, 30-36. For some history of this ceremony of light in Malabar, cf. PAYNGOT. *Holy Nativity*, 8-13.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BASIC THEMES CELEBRATED ON THE NATIVITY IN THE CHALDEAN AND MALABAR TRADITION

The whole wealth of East Syrian theology can be detected in the various hymns in their artistic and poetic form. To define the fundamental themes and explain the ideas of the more important of the hymns used in the celebration will assist us in understanding the deep theology contained in them. They have, as we have seen in the above analysis, a cluster of ideas and figures in connection with the events being commemorated which bring to mind the various aspects of God's divine dispensation. They produce reverential fear and worship in the face of the incomprehensible mystery of the union of the divine and human in the birth of the One who is eternal.

From the analysis above, it is clear that for the East Syrians the whole celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ revolves around certain fundamental theological themes. These are constantly repeated for obvious pedagogical reasons, and corroborate our affirmations from the testimonies of the Fathers who have influenced East Syrian piety or who reflect it, leading the worshipping community to grasp and personalize the basic truths that underlie the whole salvific mystery of God's divine dispensation realized in Jesus Christ. In this chapter we synthesize what we have analysed, and enunciate those basic themes recurring all through the celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ. In so doing, however, we shall prescind from discussing those issues and their terminology, namely *Kyana*, *Qnoma*, *Parsopa*, *Theotokos* and the like, peculiar to the East Syrian theology, as they belong to the field of Christology and Mariology,¹ and are therefore beyond the scope of our present

1. There are studies already available on these issues of the East Syrian Christology and Mariology; cf. GRILLMEIER, *Christ in Christian Tradition* 443-568; BABAI, *Liber*; CHEDIATH, *Christology*; SCIPIONI, *Ricerche*; Nestorio; ABRAMOVSKI-GOODMAN, *Nestorian Collection*; IBRAHIM, *La Doctrine*; SAKO, *Lettre*; PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 245-250; PODIPARA, *Mariology*; YOUSIF, *Marie, Mere du Christ*.

study which is liturgical. Here below we treat one by one the basic themes celebrated during the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ.

I. The Feast of the Nativity: Celebration of the Incarnation

A. Christ: God born in Bethlehem

i. Christ, the manifestation of God

Jesus Christ is the eschatological revelation of God. By virtue of his unity with the Father, he alone can bring us to know God: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made Him known" (Jn 1:18). He is the coming of the Word-with-God to us: "I am never alone, the Father is always with me" (Jn 16:32; 8:29); "the father is in me" and "I am in the Father" (Jn 14:10-11, 20; 10:30-38; 16:32; 17:21). In Jesus, therefore, we have a progressive historical revelation of the glory of the Father (Jn 12:38). Jesus has come down from God, from heaven (Jn 6:38), and entered the earthly sphere, the cosmos. Jesus has come from heaven (Jn 3:13), from the Father (Jn 16:28) and from God (Jn 6:46). This coming of Jesus from the heavenly spheres, 'from above', points to the nature of Jesus, because, even when he leaves the Father, the Father does not leave Jesus alone (Jn 8:29; 16:32): in the earthly Jesus "the Father is in me and I am in the Father." In Jesus God has manifested Himself as God of and for man. Anyone who sees him sees the Father (Jn 14:9). This is the mystery of the revelation of God in Christ, or the messianic event.

This Johannine vision of revelation of God in and through Christ is seen also in St Ephraem. He writes: "Son of the Maker is like unto his Father as Maker."² Ephraem writes again: "For without the firstborn no man can approach unto the Essence, to which he is equal."³

Narsai points to the revelation of the Triune God in the person of Jesus Christ. He writes in his Homily on the Nativity of Christ:

2. HNat IX, 2, cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 63.

3. HNat IV, 156, cf. CSCO 186, 82-39; ET from NPNF XIII, 233.

At the fullness of the ages, He opened the treasury of His
 Divinity
 and enriched the universe from the treasures that (contain)
 the manifestation of the (Divine) Persons.
 There was hidden the mystery of the Son and the Spirit
 with our redemption;
 and by our renewal, the universe has learned of the
 Trinity.⁴

We have in our liturgy of the feast of the Nativity expressions that consider Christ under this aspect of the manifestation of God – it is God who has become visible to us in and through Christ. We cite here some of the texts from our office for the feast of the Nativity where this aspect of the Babe of Bethlehem as the manifestation of God is brought to light:

He who is the image (dmuta) of God took in his love
 the form (dmuta) of a servant from the holy virgin.⁵

He is the Lord of Glory from his Father and in the body
 is of our humanity, Jesus, the seed of Abraham.⁶

Christ is 'Emmanuel' (with us God).⁷

The Only One who is in the bosom of his Father came
 and received the form (dmuta) of a servant in his bounty.

The glorious splendour from the Father who...appeared
 and shown forth for our salvation...⁸

Christ is the living image and immutable icon
 of his Father...⁹

All these can be summarized in St Paul's words. Christ Jesus is, for Paul, the one "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of men" (Phil 2:6–7).

We see, therefore, that the incarnation is a mystery of God's glory manifested among men through his dwelling in the

4. NARSAI, *Metrical Homilies*, 40–41.

5. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 323, onita d-Batar; trans. n. 18.

6. *Ibid.*, 324, onita d-Basaliqe; trans. n. 28a.

7. *Ibid.*, 326, Bate; trans. n. 44a.

8. *Ibid.*, 329, 330, oniata d-Mawtba; trans. n. 57, 60.

9. *Ibid.*, 346, Slota; trans. n. 174.

flesh. Christ is the 'first symbol'¹⁰ or the sacrament of God as revealed by himself: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). The celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ, therefore, is the celebration of the glory of the splendour of God revealed through Jesus Christ.¹¹

ii. *Christ's eternal existence with the Father*

The whole event expressed in the prologue of St John's Gospel is the event of the manifestation of Jesus on earth. However this Jesus is pre-existent with God (Jn. 1:3ff.). Although the feast of the Nativity concentrates its attention on the temporal birth of Christ, the divine sonship of Christ in virtue of his eternal birth from the Father is well affirmed in the liturgical texts. The Babe whose feast of the Nativity we are celebrating is none other than the Son of God, generated from all eternity, equal to the Father in dignity and nature: "...for he is equal to the Father in authority and he is the Lord God..."¹² and "...he taught that he was in the bosom of his Father before the worlds without beginning, for he is God."¹³ We again proclaim: "O Christ who is born eternally from the Father without beginning..." and "O Christ, eternal Son and consubstantial with God, child generated before the stars, who is born today in Bethlehem for the sealing of prophecy, we beseech..."¹⁴ This equality of the Word with the Father is well expressed in Ephraem's *Letter to Publius*

Look at ... the ray of his light, ... at him who is equal in essence with his begetter, at him whose nature is commensurate with that from which he sprang, at him who is near to him, yet far from him, at him who is mingled with him, yet distant from him, who is with him and is not distant, at his right hand and not far off...¹⁵

The infinite fecundity of the Father manifests itself in the generation of another Divine Person, equal to him in everything.

10. CASEL, *Mysterium des Kommenden*, 146.

11. LEMARIE, *Manifestation*, 98.

12. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 330, Mawtba; n. 62.

13. *Ibid.*, 334, Sabbah; trans. n. 79a.

14. *Ibid.*, 345, Karozuto; trans. n. 157, 159.

15. BROCK, *Ephraem's Letter*, 278.

At the incarnation, this eternal and invisible manifestation of God crosses the frontiers of eternity and enters the world. This is the great theophany we are celebrating in the feast of the Nativity of Christ.

iii. *Christ's divinity and the virginal birth*

The liturgical texts speak of Christ's divinity and his virginal birth as closely related. Already before Mary conceived Christ in her womb, he existed as divine person, as Son of his heavenly Father by virtue of his eternal birth from the Father, and therefore, he did not need an earthly father to become man. Thus he becomes man without the violation of the virginity of his mother and remains always the Son of the eternal Father. We can say, therefore, that "by being born of the virgin, the Word has manifested His divinity."¹⁶ During the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity this fact of the close relationship of Christ's divinity and the virginal birth is brought to light in a variety of expressions:

Blessed be the One who has fulfilled the prophecy,
and has appeared to us from the virgin...

Blessed be the One who is revealed without any doubt,
and who was united without confusion, and was born
without marriage...

Blessed be the high and supreme One, who rose and came
from heaven, and resided in the chaste womb...

Blessed be the eternal Babe who has come to us from heaven,
and dwelt in the virginal womb...¹⁷

O Christ, who is born today from the virgin Mary without
marriage,

Son of marvel, God Almighty of the ages..., we beseech...¹⁸

To you O Babe,... living image and immutable icon of his
Father,

who from the mysterious bosom of his Father, are
eternally born,

16. OURY, *Noel*, 387.

17. BEDJAN *Breviarium* I, 339, Qanone; trans. n. 98-99, 101-103.

18. *Ibid.*, 345, Karozuta; trans. n. 161.

and took flesh from the womb sealed immutably with
virginity...

To you O Babe, eternal and temporal, who are eternally
from your Father before ages and in time were seen from
Mary
the perpetual virgin, who conserved virginal sanctity....¹⁹

We have in the writings of Ephraem and Narsai enough
of texts which speak of the birth of the Son of God from a
virgin mother. In a *Homily on the Nativity*, Ephraem writes:

Just as the bush on Horeb bore God in the flame,
so did Mary bear Christ in her virginity...
in all purity the God-Man came forth from the womb into
creation....

A novel wonder has God performed among the earth-born,
in that He is born without marriage....²⁰

Narsai in his *Metrical Homily on the Nativity* speaks of the Spirit's
role at the birth of Christ from the virgin mother:

By the power of the Spirit, He structured a man from a
woman,
so that in his visible state men might see the One hidden
from all.

Without the pigments of human seed, He depicted him in
a womb,
so that He might exalt his conception above the order
(established) for his fellow (men)....

New tidings Gabriel sowed in the ears of Mary,
(announcing) a new conception not according to human seed.
The pure virgin carried the fruit which the (angel's) voice
had sowed;
and the Spirit sounded on the harp of her soul a hymn of
praise.²¹

Christ's virginal birth in time, therefore, seems to be as it were
a faint image of his eternal birth in *sinu Patris*.²² For Theodote

19. *Ibid.*, Slota; trans. n. 174' 175.

20. BROCK, *The Harp*, 63-64. For similar texts in Ephraem, cf. HNat. II, 13-14; IV, 85, 120-121, 130-131; VIII, 16; X, 7.

21. NARSAI *Metrical Homilies*, 48-49.

22. FLICOTEAUX, *Le mystere* 15.

of Ancyra, the virginity of the mother of Christ is a clear proof for the divinity of her son Christ.²³ Thus Christ who was born in time without a father and who was born eternally without a mother is a Divine Person, and this divinity of the Babe born from the virgin Mary is well affirmed in the texts of our liturgical celebration of the feast of the nativity.

iv *Christ's birth : fulfilment of prophecies*

As we have seen in the analysis done in the previous chapter, most of the psalms, prayers and hymns employed in the office of the feast of the Nativity bring out the fact that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of a saviour are accomplished in the birth of Christ:

the mysteries and types and allegories that the prophecy prefigured from the beginning were explained to us through the good news which the angels gave to the shepherds about the adorable and new child who is born for us in the grotto in Epharata...²⁴

This theme of the fulfilment of the prophecies is brought out again and again during the liturgical celebration, so that the faith be confirmed in Jesus Christ, the Saviour whom God promised before ages:

You are the light, life and truth (Jn 14:6), Christ, our Life-Giver. By the Holy Spirit the prophets prophesied and announced you in their revelations....

All the holy prophets had previously announced your birth, O Jesus Christ, our King, who came in his love and freed our race from error²⁵

Blessed be the One who has fulfilled the prophecy and has appeared to us from the virgin and is born in the grotto in Bethlehem Epharta²⁶.

... Draw near, O peoples, and invoke his name, because "the Lord has declared us righteous," as is written (Is 57:

23. AUBINEAU, *Une homelie*, 236-237; cf. also LUCIUS *Heiligenkultus*, 477.

24. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 349 Mazmore d-Sapra; trans. n. 177a.

25. *Ibid.*, 332, Mawtba; trans. n. 67, 68.

26. *Ibid.*, 339, Qanona; trans. n. 99.

12): the virgin has truly conceived and brought forth according to the words of prophets (Is 7:14). Cry out, O brothers, glory to Emmanuel for his mysteries.²⁷

The Patristic tradition has well attested to the fact that Pss 2, 72 and 110, sung during the Qale d- Sahra, are messianic and find their fulfilment in Christ (see above, 175-178). Other psalms and psalm verses used in the liturgical celebration, as we have seen above, in their ultimate meaning, have their realization in Jesus Christ because

the whole of ancient tradition concerning the liturgical use of the Psalms rest on their messianic significance, For one thing it is this significance which constituted all their value for the primitive Christian community. It adopted the Psalms, not because of their religious value nor because of their inspired character, but only because it thought they were concerned with Christ. Their whole use in the Church rests, therefore, on a messianic meaning.²⁸

Malachi named the Christ 'Sun of Righteousness' (Mal 4:2); Zechariah predicted the mystery of his resurrection (Zech 6:11-13).²⁹ David called the Christ 'Wonder' (Ps 17:7); Isaiah called the Christ 'Counsellor', 'Hero' and 'Saviour of the peoples' (Is 9:6); Moses called him 'the great prophet in Israel' (Deut 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37); Micah named him the 'Ruler who reigns over everything' (Mic 5:2; Mt 2:6; Jn 7:42); Jonah ministered in the abyss to the mystery of Christ's burial and resurrection (Jon 1:17 2:10; Mt 12:40); Daniel spoke about the Christ as the One who would come above the clouds to judge all (Dan 7:13; Mt 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 21:27; 22:69; Rev 1:7; 14:4); Ezekiel saw the Christ on the throne of judgement (Ezek 1:26-28; Rev 1:13; 4:2)³⁰

Thomas of Edessa, a sixth century East Syrian theologian, writes:

And why is it said: "Today is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord in the city of David?" (Lk 2:10). (The angel mentions the city of David in order to show that,

27. *Ibid.*, 326, Bate; trans n. 44a.

28. DANIELOU, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 315.

29. BEDJAN, *Breviarium I*, 328, Mawtba; trans. n. 51.

30. *Ibid.*, 332, Mawtba; trans. n. 66-68.

in him who is born today are fulfilled God's promises to the fathers: and that, in him, are blessed all the peoples according to the promises (made) to Abraham: by your descendants are blessed all the peoples" (Gen 26:4;) (and in order to show also) that, the promise to David rests upon him and has the exit: I will set on your throne (him who is) from the fruits of your womb" (Ps 131:11).³¹

Thus all the major lines of the Old Testament traditions converge in the expectation of a Messiah; Davidism, prophetism, sapiential theology and apocalyptic. All these movements find their fulfilment, and God's fidelity in his promises reaches its highest expression, in Christ, the poor, the non-violent, humble and suffering Messiah, the heir of the Davidic oracles (Lk 1:32-33; Acts 2:29ff.; 13:22ff.).³² The qanona of the Ps 89 sung during the Nocturns (Lelya) expresses this fundamental truth: "The good things which God promised to Abraham and David, in our days he fulfilled through the deeds in Christ, praise to him."³³ Thus in Christ God has definitively entered into history in order to establish his rule as a kingdom of freedom in love.

B. Humanity of the Son of God

i. Christ's birth in the flesh

To describe the incarnation of Christ, the Syriac fathers use very commonly the expression that he "put on the body" or "clothed himself in the body." Aphraat sees Jacob clothing Joseph as a type of the Father sending the Son to put on the body.³⁴ In his *Hymns on the Nativity*, Ephraem speaks of Christ as "maker" like his Father, who made for himself a body and "clothed himself" in it. In the incarnation, Christ brings mercy from his Father and "clothes our weakness with glory":

The Son of the Maker like unto His Father as Maker!

He made Himself a pure body, He clothed Himself with it,
and came forth and clothed our weakness with glory,
which in His mercy He brought from the Father.³⁵

31. CARR, *Tractatus* 18; ET mine.

32. KASPER, *God of Jesus*, 166.

33. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 283*; see above, p. 154.

34. *Demonstratio* XXI, PS I, 953, 9-12; cf. also MURRAY, *Symbols*, 69-70, 310.

35. HNat. IX, 2, cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 63; ET from NPNF, XIII, 240.

The theme of the humanity of Christ is expounded, meditated and celebrated during our liturgy of the feast of the Nativity. Christ's participation in our human nature is seen from the fact that he has a human body:

For at the end of the last times he has
appeared in flesh from our race ...³⁶

In flesh was born from the house of David,
Christ who gives life ...³⁷

The glorious splendour from the Father, who, while in our flesh
appeared and shone forth for our salvation ...³⁸

Blessed be the Lord who was made flesh ...

Blessed be the Word who was made flesh ...

Blessed be the One who appeared in our flesh ...³⁹

Living image ... of his Father, who ... took flesh
from the womb sealed immutably with virginity ...⁴⁰

ii. *Christ's birth from a mother*

St Paul speaks to us about God's becoming man thus: But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal 4:4). Thus Christ's birth in this world is made just like as that of any human being, ie through a childbirth. The liturgical prayers of the feast of the Nativity give a strong accent on this theme of Christ's birth from a mother:

Blessed be the One who ... was born from the womb ...

Blessed be he who ... was born from his handmaid ...

Blessed be the Word who ... was born from a virgin ...⁴¹

Adore the Son, the firstborn, the holy One,

who is born from the blessed Mary ...⁴²

O Christ, who is born temporally at the end of times
from the virgin Mary ... we beseech ...

36. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 321, onita d-Qdam of Ramsa; trans. n. 9.

37. *Ibid.*, 324, onita d-Basaliqe; trans. n. 28a.

38. *Ibid.*, 330, Mawtba; trans. n. 60.

39. *Ibid.*, 340, 341, Qanone; trans. n. 108, 110, 119.

40. *Ibid.*, 340, Slota; trans. n. 174.

41. *Ibid.*, 340, Qanone; trans. n. 105, 106, 110.

42. *Ibid.*, 343, Sabbah; trans. n. 146.

O Christ, who, in your birth from the daughter of Eve ...
have promised new life ... we beseech⁴³

iii *Christ, 'Son of David'*

The Davidic kingship or monarchy of the Old Testament always pointed beyond itself: it was a promise of a future fulfilment and almost necessarily gave rise to messianic expectations. It awakened hopes of a new son of David who would truly be God's Son and the definitive bringer of the universal peace and salvation.⁴⁴ This hope that fills the entire Old Testament reaches its actualization in Jesus, through whom God definitively entered the time and space of this world. And precisely for this reason the Davidic expectations of an eschatological kingship have been fulfilled in Jesus who is a descent from David (2 Tim 2:8; cf. also Rom 1:3; Mt 22:42 Mk 12:35; Jn 7:42; Rev 5:5; 22: 16; Lk 1:60; 2:4). This theme in allusion to the humanity of Christ recurs in the celebration of the nativity:

Christ is born of the virgin Mary, and he is
from the seed of David and Abraham ...

From the seed of David the just of king:
Mary has brought forth for us a child of wonder"⁴⁵

Christ is "the king from (the root) of David."⁴⁶

O Christ, Lord of David through your divinity and
son of David through your humanity
who is born today in the house of David
for the confirmation of prophecy of your father David ...

O Christ, sun of justice, who shone forth from the house
of David, who have manifested your glory
in our human nature ... we beseech...⁴⁷

C. The Feast of the Nativity: Celebration of the Infant Saviour

The theme of the childhood assumed by God seems to be very dear to Ephraem. The fact that the Babe of Bethlehem is true God and Saviour of the whole universe is itself a matter of

43. *Ibid* 345, Karozuta; trans. n. 158, 165.

44. VON RAD, *Theology* I, 320ff.

45. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 324, oniatia d-Basalique; trans. n. 30, 32.

46. *Ibid.*, 344, Qanona; trans. n. 160, 162.

47. *Ibid.*, 345, Karozuta; trans. n. 160,162.

wonder. Ephraem writes: 'For a wonder it is that God should show himself as a babe.'⁴⁸ He continues:

The High One became a little child * and in him was hidden a treasure of wisdom sufficing all.....

When he sucked the milk of Mary * he was suckling all with life; while he was lying in his mother's bosom, in his bosom were all creatures lying.⁴⁹

During the liturgy of the feast of the Nativity, we too celebrate the "glorious" and "wonderful child who is born to us to redeem us from sin and death,"⁵⁰ and therefore we proclaim: "It is you, Babe of Wonder, Lord of all, whom the Church honours."⁵¹ Further, the childhood assumed by God by being born of a woman is remembered and celebrated through the greeting addressed to his mother:

Peace to Mary who begets, rears, milks, carries and rejoices! Peace to the small manger! Peace to the grotto! Peace to the swaddling clothes! Peace to the bridegroom! Peace to Gabriell! There the gold, there the myrrh, there the incense, there Joseph, there the angels, there the crying "holy", there the jubilations without end!⁵²

D. The Feast of the Nativity: Celebration of the Mother of Christ

In our liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ, a special place of honour is given to the Mother of Christ: On the holy altar shall be the commemoration of Mary, virgin and holy Mother, the Mother of God,⁵³ so that through her prayers wars may come to an end, and the Church and her children sing glory; and we seek from her Son and pray for his love to spare us through the prayer of his mother.⁵⁴

The Church sings praises to Mary alike of her virginity, motherhood and for the salvation effected through her giving birth to the Saviour:

48. HNat. I, 9; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 2.

49. HNat. IV, 148, 153-154; cf. *Ibid.*, 39; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 233.

50. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 320, 321, Slota & onita d-Qdam; trans. n. 8 & 3.

51. *Ibid.*, 337, Qanona; trans, n. 83.

52. *Ibid.*, 338, Madrasa; trans. n. 89a.

53. Originally, 'Mother of Christ'.

54. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 334, Mawtba; trans. n. 75.

How good of you O (Mary), joyful Womb, to have provided all the happiness to the race of the mortals, because for us the King Christ has appeared from you through a Wonder. Peace be with you, blessed among women, for in you are blessed Eve and her children...; O Mary, blessed Mother.... you, therefore, have been exalted by your Son ... Exalted is your annunciation, glorified your conception, and your birth marvelled at; the fruit that appeared from you is exulted, because he has reconciled with us the heavenly and the earthly (beings), who are at enmity, and he reconciled with us the Father who sent him to our humanity.⁵⁵

The community at worship, when celebrating the Nativity of the Son of God, recalls his mother, greets her and expresses its festal joy:

Peace to you, full of grace, since the Lord our Lord is with you.

Peace to you, Mother of the Babe who does not grow old.
Peace to you, Mother of the Saviour of (all) creatures.

Peace to you...who were honoured by the Magi.

Peace to you, who made the Seraphim rejoice and were adored by the shepherds.

Peace to your womb which carried the Saviour of all the worlds.

Peace to you from whom our Saviour sucked milk.⁵⁶

The East Syrian liturgy depicts the divine maternity of Mary through a beautiful Old Testament imagery (Gen 49:9):

Who has ever seen a ewe which carries a young lion and brings it up without being afraid? Mary is the ewe, and Christ is the young lion, and she brings him up without being afraid. Glory to you, Lord, glory to you, Son of God, who has honoured Mary, who has given birth to you.⁵⁷

The Church takes pride in Mary, "who begot, reared, milked and carried"⁵⁸ the Saviour of the world. She is the "bearer of salvation" and "Mother of the hero and the Saviour;" "the King

55. *Ibid.*, 331-332, Mawtba; trans. n. 66.

56. *Ibid.*, 327, Mawtba; trans. n. 50.

57. *Ibid.*, 344, 'Alam of Qale d-Sahra; trans. n. 147. Cf. also Ephraem's HNat. VIII, 17, cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 62.

58. See above, 218, n. 52.

of kings" is born from her; and she is the one who carried in her womb "the sun that makes all happy;" she is the one "who brought forth the Lord of all who saved us from death."⁵⁹

Mary, the God-bearer, as the first fruit of the human race, is the best and holiest of earthly creatures and the fitting gift from mankind to the Creator and Redeemer:

Who would suffice for your goodness, O God, the Word, the Only (Son)? For you came down and were revealed through our first fruit (taken) from us for our salvation. In fact, all the deeds, that have been accomplished well through your sign, through (this) First Fruit, offer acknowledgement to you: from angels, glory; from the sky, a bright star; from the Magi, offerings; from the shepherds, adoration. From the earth you have chosen a cave; from the desert, a manger; from our race, a holy and virgin mother. And you are worshipped by all creation, O Christ, have mercy on us.⁶⁰

Mary, who "knew not a man" and yet gave birth to the incorporeal God, is for the East Syrian Church at the same time mother and virgin: she truly becomes mother, bringing forth in the world an infant; she remains virgin, bringing forth in the world the Word made flesh: mother-virgin of a man-God.⁶¹ God, through the working of his grace, chose, and through the overshadowing of his power, sanctified the honourable Mary: she is "the beautiful virgin and the beauty of virgins" from whom is born the Saviour wonderfully; she is "the bodily chariot" of God's glory; she is "the spring⁶² of purity and stream of holiness"; she is "the token of virginity and icon of chastity;" she is "the temple of light and mansion⁶³ of glory;" she "the rational censer that carries the fire of divinity" and "the bodily thurible full of benevolence;" she is "the splendid crown of the holy Catholic Church and the shining garland of right orthodoxy of apostolic glory."⁶⁴

59. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 326, Mawtba; trans. n. 48.

60. *Ibid.*, 343, 'onita d-Lelya; trans. n. 145.

61. AUBINEAU, *Une homelie*, 236.

62. Joel 3:18.

63. Proverb 9:1,

64. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 348, Slota d-Sapra; trans. n. 176a.

On the feast of the Nativity of Christ the Son, it is quite fitting that we remember and celebrate the maternity of virgin Mary, because it is through her maternity that Christ is made man and given to us Saviour. In other words, it is by his human birth from a virgin mother that Christ has become the Redeemer of mankind. The celebration of the Nativity of Christ, therefore, is also the celebration of the maternity of the virgin Mary, as it is said in Ephraem's *Homily on the Nativity*:

this day Mary has become for us
the heaven that bears God,
for in her the exalted Godhead
has descended and dwelt;
in her It has grown small, to make us great,
— but Its nature does not diminish;
in her It has woven us a garment
that shall be for our salvation.
In her the words of the prophets
and the just are all contained;
from her the Luminous One has shone forth
and dispelled the darkness of paganism.⁶⁵

E. The Feast of the Nativity: Celebration of the Birthday of the Risen Lord

i. *The Liturgical Year: Celebration of the Mystery of Salvation*

Every feast of the liturgical year recalls, reenacts and relives the redemption realized through Jesus Christ. It is the 'total mystery' that is celebrated in every feast, and therefore, the salvation we receive through the liturgical celebration of a particular mystery of the economy of salvation is indeed a participation in the 'historia salutis'. The mysteries, though feasted individually and separately, are essentially indivisible from the global mystery, and "in the early liturgical tradition this reality is one unique event, the paschal mystery in its totality, the mystery of Christ and of our salvation in him."⁶⁶ The feasts of the Church are, therefore, neither mere commemorations nor just anniversaries recalling a past event; they are the 're-presentation', the 'putting back into the present', of the different phases of the mystery, their insertion in time and place.⁶⁷

65. BROCK, *The Harp*, 67.

66. TAFT *Beyond East and West*. 142.

67. JENNY, *Note sur le réalisme*, 99; cf. also HILD, *Le mystère*, 112.

Whatever aspect of the mystery we may be contemplating, the Christian feasts transform the time through which we are passing, because we meet in each of them the living and victorious Christ: "The holy year in its entirety is an image of the eternal and divine economy of salvation and contains the whole mystery."⁶⁸ Thus each feast is the 'refraction' in time of the unique mystery of salvation. A Christian can have more devotion to the mystery of the incarnation, another to the resurrection, still another to the ascension, but it is the occasion to remember the words of St Cyril of Jerusalem: "Our piety does not separate the mysteries."⁶⁹ Year by year they take us further and further into the knowledge of Christ's mystery, so that imperceptibly we too find ourselves growing in him.

ii. *The Nativity of Christ and its relation to the Paschal Mystery*

The feast of the Nativity of Christ is not a recalling of the incarnation in an isolated, abstract sense; it is the celebration of his personal historical and earthly incarnation which implies and involves in a real sense the mysteries of his death and resurrection. The redemption begins its course with the incarnation of Christ, but reaches its full realization in his death and resurrection. The 'grotto' in Bethlehem is wholly oriented towards the 'Cross' on Calvary and is "the image of the sepulchre."⁷⁰ We see, therefore, that the Nativity of Jesus Christ is dependent on the Cross as the climax of his kenosis, because,

that humiliation of the Word which is the essential truth of the Incarnation would hardly be complete enough to meet the need of His creatures, unless He were conformed to the mysterious law of sacrifice.⁷¹

The 'yes' which the Son replies to the Father contains both the grotto and the Cross. Without the Cross, the Nativity – or the Incarnation – is nothing but a theophany, or the perfection and elevation of human nature, with no biblical foundation. And without the incarnation, the mystery of the Cross is no more than the heroic exemplary death of a prophet or a martyr. Ephraem in his *Hymns on the Nativity* has made a number of

68. CASEL, *Le mystere du culte*, 125

69. Catechese XVI, 4: PG 33, 924A; cf. MIQUEL, *La fete*, 84.

70. ANDRONIKOV, *Fetes*. 108.

71. UNDERHILL, *Worship*, 57.

allusions to the close relationship that exists between Christ's Nativity, Passion, Death and Resurrection:

When the lambs bleat in the wilderness
into the Womb the Paschal Lamb entered.

Let Thy day, O Lord, give us all manner of joy,
with the flowers of peace, let us keep Thy Passover.

They (the shepherds) brought and presented
a suckling lamb to the Paschal Lamb,
a sacrifice to the Sacrifice,
a lamb of time to the Lamb of truth ...⁷²

In his *Hymns on the Resurrection*, Ephraem writes again:

- I 1. The Lamb has come for us from the House of David,
the Priest and Pontiff from Abraham;
He became for us both Lamb and Pontiff,
giving His body for sacrifice, His blood for sprinkling.
Blessed is His accomplishment!
5. From on high did Power descend to us,
from a womb did Hope shine out for us,
from the grave Salvation appeared for us,
and on the right hand the King sits for us:
blessed is His glory!
6. From on high He flowed like a river,
from Mary He stemmed as from a root,
from the cross He descended as fruit,
as the first-fruit He ascended to heaven.
Blessed is His will!⁷³

The feast of the Nativity, therefore, does not celebrate solely the birth of the Lord; it commemorates the whole mystery of salvation, but under the aspect of the incarnation: having accomplished all things, Christ "is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). Our redemption is based on the fact that God is incarnate, that this man is the Son of God, and that he, in his capacity of Kyrios, in glory, is at the right

72. HNat. IV, 34, 57; VII, 3; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 28, 30, 56; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 230, 237. Cf. also SPASSKIJ, *La Paque*, 304.

73. HResur. I, 1, 5-6; cf. CSCO 248, Syr. 108, 78-79. But first strophe of the first hymn is not found in Beck's edition. However, we have it in SLIM, *Hymne I*, 511; cf. also LAMY, *Hymni et Sermones* IV, 750. ET from BROCK, *The Harp*, 27-28.

hand of the Father.⁷⁴ Christ, whose Nativity is celebrated, is our Saviour, who is the Lord Christ. The terms 'Lord' and 'Christ' are the titles by which the New Testament designates the Risen Jesus (Acts 2:36). The title 'Lord' (Kyrios) confers to Christ in an effective manner the fullness of his prerogative as God-Man, because in his humanity as well as in his divinity, he is glorified with the glory which he had before the world was made (Jn 17:5). Christ by being Kyrios exercised fully his function of mediator between God and man.⁷⁵

In our liturgical texts, we may not often see the word 'resurrection' or 'Paschal Mystery', but the whole content of the feast is expressed in such terms as salvation, liberation or renewal. How the liturgy of the feast of the Nativity is oriented toward Christ's passion and death can be seen even from the rubrical instruction to genuflect during the singing of the messianic psalms of the Qale d-Sahra of the feast (see 178 above). Above all, the Babe who is born in the grotto in Bethlehem is called 'Saviour' all through the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity:

O our Saviour, the angels rejoice in your birth,
and men on earth sing glory...⁷⁶

On the day of your birth, our Saviour,
the spiritual and earthly ones rejoiced...
... because today is born in Bethlehem
the Saviour of creatures.⁷⁷

Blessed be the Lord who ... made known to us through
his birth that he is our Saviour from wickedness.⁷⁸

From the East the Magi carried and brought
offerings to our Saviour ...⁷⁹

On the day of your birth, O Jesus, our Saviour,
the creatures rejoice, those on high with those below.⁸⁰
... May peace and mercy and goodness abound for all nations
because the Saviour of the creatures is born ...⁸¹

74. CASEL, *Le mystere du culte*, 118.

75. HILD, *Le mystere*, 87.

76. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 325, 'onita d-Basalique; trans. n. 35.

77. *Ibid.*, 330-331, Mawtba; trans. n. 63, 64.

78. *Ibid.*, 341, Qanona; trans. n. 118.

79. *Ibid.*, 344, Qanona; trans. n. 151.

80. *Ibid.*, 350, 'onita d-Sapra; trans. n. 187.

81. *Ibid.*, 350 d-Barek; trans. n. 193a.

Thus in the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity, though under the aspect of the incarnation, we celebrate Christ who became our Saviour through his birth, death and resurrection, which form but one mystery of salvation.

iii. *The feast of the Nativity and the Eucharist*

The celebration of the feast of the Nativity reaches its culmination, not in a mere proclamation of the past event, but in the commemoration actualized through the celebration of the Eucharist, the unique memorial of the Risen Christ. In the Eucharist we re-enact and re-live here and now the salvific mysteries of Christ; there we celebrate the "feasts" of his "dispensation (mdabbranuta)." ⁸² Ephraem sees no difference between the effect of Christ's presence in Mary's womb and that of his presence in the Eucharist. He writes in his *Hymns on Faith*:

Fire and Spirit in the womb of her who bore you,
Fire and Spirit are in the river in which You were baptized,
Fire and Spirit are in our baptism,
and in the Bread and Cup is Fire and Spirit.⁸³

In his *Hymns on the Nativity*, IV, Ephraem makes allusions to the relationship between the liturgical celebration of the Nativity and the Eucharist.⁸⁴ For him, the Babe Jesus, born of Mary, is the 'seed that grows into wheat', which symbolizes the future abundance and nourishment in the Eucharist. He writes:

From the Virgin's womb as from a strong rock
sprouted the seed, whence was much fruit!⁸⁵

Again, for Ephraem, the Babe Jesus is the source of nourishment for the entire world. Mary says:

How shall I open the fountain of milk
to You, O Fountain? Or how shall I give
nourishment to You who nourish all from Your Table? ⁸⁶

Ephraem sees the beginning of the Eucharist in Jesus on the day of his Nativity:

82. BEDJAN. *Breviarium* I, 346, Karozuta: trans. n. 173.

83. HFid. X, 17; cf. CSCO 154, Syr. 73, 51; ET from BROCK, *The Harp*, 16.

84. Cf. YOUSIF, *La Vierge Marie*, 49-80, especially, 61-64; cf. also ID., *L'Eucharistie* 121-127, 342-356.

85. HNat. IV, 85; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 33.

86. HNat. V, 24; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 50; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 236.

In December/January (Kanon) when the seed is hidden in the earth,
there sprouted forth from the Womb the Ear of life.
In April (Nisan) when the seed was sprouting in the air,
a Sheaf sowed itself in the earth.⁸⁷

The incarnation is, for Ephraem, not only God revealing himself to us in finite forms, but also the vehicle of deification ultimately by Christ giving his body to us. In his *Homily on our Lord*, he says,

So then, by leaven from the body of Him who completes, the defect of our formation is supplied. For it was not meat that our Lord should have cut off anything from His body to supply the deficiency of other bodies; but with that which could be taken away from Him. He supplied the deficiency of them that lacked, just as in that which can be eaten, mortals eat him. He supplied then the deficiency, and gave life to mortality, that we may know that from the body in which fulness dwelt, the deficiency of them that lacked was supplied; and from the body in which life dwelt life was given to mortals.⁸⁸

We may say that the Eucharistic celebration on the feast of the Nativity continues in a real sense the mystery of incarnation in the world today. Timothy of Jerusalem even sees a parallelism between the grotto where Jesus was born and the church where the Eucharistic mysteries are accomplished.⁸⁹ In our liturgical texts too, the manger is seen as the prefigurement of the altar: Peace to the small manger, which for us prefigures the holy altar."⁹⁰ The same Holy Spirit who was at work at the time of conception of Jesus in Mary's womb is active today on the altar to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Moses bar Kepha (813–903)⁹¹, a West Syrian writer, says:

As He [Holy Spirit] came down into the womb of the holy Virgin Mary – according as the angel said: "The Holy Spirit shall come," etc. – and made the body which was from the

87. HNat. IV, 31–32; cf. *Ibid.*, 28; ET from NPNF, XIII, 230.

88. SDN, XI; cf. CSCO 270, Syr. 116, 10; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 310.

89. CAPELLE, *Les homelies liturgiques*, 19.

90. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 338, Madrasa: Bate; trans. n. 89a.

91. WRIGHT, *Syriac Literature*, 207–208.

Virgin the body of God the Word, so He comes down upon the bread and wine which are upon the altar, makes them that body and blood of God the Word which was from the Virgin. Again, we say thus: just as in the case of the holy Virgin Mary the Father willed that the Son should become incarnate, but the Son came into the womb of the Virgin and became incarnate, and the Spirit also came down to the Virgin and caused the Son to be incarnate of her: so here also in the case of the altar: the Father wills that the Son be united hypostatically to the bread and wine, and that they become His body and His blood; but the Son comes down that He may be hypostatically united to them; and the Spirit also comes down that He may unite them to Him, even as He caused Him to be incarnate of the Virgin.⁹²

Just as the incarnation is hidden but saving mystery, the Eucharist under the veil of bread and wine is the continuation of that same hidden mystery of the incarnation:

Come together, O peoples, let us draw nigh to it with holiness of our bodies and of our souls; this is indeed the mystery that was hidden, and which is given for our sake for the remission of sins, halleluia! halleluia!⁹³

Thus the sacrament of the Eucharist is the living presence of the Word incarnate and actualizes, in a way, the birth of Christ in the Church today:

Behold! our eyes have seen and hands have taken the bliss which the angels on high have given to us.⁹⁴

At the Eucharistic celebration, the centre and climax of the celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ, therefore, we are experiencing the 'fullness of time': each feast is imbued with the 'presence' of the event that it celebrates. It is the birthday of the Risen Lord that we are celebrating today. There are numerous texts in the Liturgy insisting on this 'today' in the mystery: "Today is born to you in the city of David a Saviour who is the Lord Christ." Ephrem uses the expression 'Yawman' (today, HNat. III, 1); then he employs the term 'Yalda' (birth) which means both the past event and the feast of the Nativity and

92. CONNOLLY - CODRINGTON, *Two Commentaries*, 60.

93. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 352, Unnaya d-Bem; trans. n. 214.

94. *Ibid.*, 353, d-Pagrak; Bate; trans. n. 220.

therefore, both the birth and the feast of the Nativity are lived in the celebration. The mystery celebrated on the day of the feast unites them; they are one and the same thing: "Blessed be the Infant who today has gladdened Bethlehem" (HNat. III, 1).⁹⁵ Such texts do not merely reconstitute a fact of the past; rather they express the participation of all believers in the great 'today' ushered in by the advent of the Kingdom and realized in the Risen Christ here and now. As we have already said above, we are recalling today not simply that past event of Christ's birth in time, but we are also celebrating what has become today of the One who was born in Bethlehem in his present situation and condition as the Exalted Lord, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever.⁹⁶

II. The Feast of the Nativity: Celebration of our Salvation

To accept Jesus as the one who has been sent by God, that is, as the one who comes from above, is salvation. Salvation comes from above: from God. Thus all salvation has its beginning with a descending movement from above. Jesus who was born in Bethlehem is God's descending gift of salvation to the world. For St John, the historical Jesus is 'fullness of grace and truth, (Jn 1-14):

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:1-3).

The living tradition of the early Church was ever conscious of the salvific value of incarnation. For Leo the Great, the Church celebrates on the feast of the Nativity the mystery of salvation:

95. Cf. YOUSIF, *L'Eucharistie*, 363.

96. BERGER, *Ostern und Weihnachten*, 1-20; MASSI, *La dimensione*, 281-300.

97. *In Nativitate Domini* V, sermo 22, cf. SC 22, 122.

sacramentum salutis.⁹⁷ The redemption is begun at the instant of incarnation, although it was completed only through the death and resurrection of Jesus – the first victory of Christ over the Evil One was the birth of Jesus itself from the virgin Mary, conceived of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸

The feast of the Nativity, therefore, has all its relevance and meaning only when one sees it in the context of God's divine dispensation (*mdabbranuta*) which is realized in Jesus Christ:

The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:26–28).

i. *Christ: the light of the World*

The theological concept of Christ as the Light shining in the darkness – that is, victorious over darkness – has its origins in the Gospel of John. Christ Jesus, the pre-existent Son with the Father (Jn 1:1) is the origin and the future of all that is created (Jn 1:3ff.). He appears among us as a light of the first day of creation through which day and night, light and darkness were separated (Gen 1:3–5), 'the light of the world' (Jn 9:4ff), and which lightens all men through his coming into the world (Jn 1:9–10). Jesus Christ shines in his human body as light in darkness (Jn 1:5), a light which illumines all men (Jn 1:4, 9), the new day is inaugurated in Jesus as light in the darkness: "I am the light" (Jn 8:12; 12:46; 3:9). The incarnation, therefore, is another expression for 'the coming of light' in earthly spheres, in our darkness: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5).

Ephraem in his *Hornily on the Nativity*, speaks of the incarnation and birth of Christ from Mary as the resemblance of the first day of creation:

Therefore this day resembles
the first day of creation:
on that day created things were established,
on this, the earth is renewed,

98. SOOS, *Le mystere liturgique*, 106–115.

and because of Adam it is blessed
 – – –having been cursed because of him.
 Eve and Adam through sin
 introduced death into the created world;
 creation's Lord gave us, by His Only-begotten
 through Mary, new life again.⁹⁹

The earthly Jesus is the presence of the spiritual light of the world among us. This Johannine vision of Christ as the light in the darkness is taken up again by Ephraem who sees Christ's birth as the appearance of the spiritual light that dispells the darkness of human hearts. He writes:

The day of the All-Lightening is bright * through his birth *
 It is the pillar of radiance * which drives away, by its
 beams * the work of darkness * After the type of that day
 * wherein light was created * and sundered the darkness
 * that spread over the beauty of Creation, * the radiance
 of the birth of our Saviour * came in to sunder the darkness
 that was in the heart.¹⁰⁰

The universal Church proclaims Christ, through the confession of her faith, as "Light from Light, true God from true God."¹⁰¹ In the biblical sense, light, the symbol of God (Jn. 1:5) is used to manifest the themes of truth and goodness. Therefore, Christ who is the embodiment of truth and goodness in this world is himself light of the world: "I am the way, and truth and life" (Jn 14:6). Ephraem writes again: "Risen is the Light of the Kingdom in Ephrata the city of David....Glory to Him who sowed His light in the darkness."¹⁰² Thomas of Edessa too subscribes to this idea of Ephraem: "...likewise the coming of our Lord Christ fills our souls with the light of truth and knowledge."¹⁰³

The whole Morning Office (Sapra) of the feast of the Nativity is a solemn celebration of Christ, the Light.¹⁰⁴ The first strophe of the oniata d-Sapra proclaims: "May peace abound for

99. BROCK, *The Harp*, 68.

100. HNat. XXVI, 3; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 133-134; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 261.

101. DENZINGER-SCHONMETZER, *Enchiridion*, 125; ET from NEUNER-DUPUIS, *Christian Faith*, 7.

102. HNat. I, 7; III, 9; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 2, 21.

103. CARR, *Tractatus*, 60.

104. Cf. DALMAIS, *La lumiere*, 257-276.

you, O people of God, because Christ is born, the light of the world."¹⁰⁵ He is the "new son risen for us in the Grotto",¹⁰⁶ whose radiance enlightens us who are in the darkness of sin: "Let us praise the wonderful child who is born to us, because in him the true light has appeared to those who were sitting in the darkness."¹⁰⁷

In the Sapra for Sundays and feasts of our Lord we have two beautiful hymns of light, the first of which is an acrostic hymn called *Nuhra*, composed by Ephraem,¹⁰⁸ and the second, *Tu'yay*, composed by Narsai,¹⁰⁹ which summarize the whole economy of salvation (see 188–189 above). Therein the Church celebrates also her ardent expectation of the ultimate manifestation of the divine splendour at the time of the Parousia of the Lord. This eschatological content of these hymns is expressed succinctly in the preceding sacerdotal prayer:

O Lord, in your goodness and mercy, make us worthy of the glorious light of your manifestation and of the joyful appearance of your coming, which all creatures you have created look for, hope and expect, so that in it we may rejoice and enjoy with the true children of your mysteries in Jerusalem above, Lord of all, (for ever, Amen).¹¹⁰

The whole Morning Office (Sapra) of the feast of the Nativity is thus a solemn celebration of Christ the Light, who gives us "the light of life" (Jn 8:12) and who is "the fair and pleasant sun in whose splendour is loosened the darkness of death."¹¹¹ In these expressions we see the fulfilment of the words of Isaiah 9:2: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light

105. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 349; trans. n. 181.

106. *Ibid.*, 350, 'onita d-Sapra; trans. n. 185.

107. *Ibid.*, 321, 'onita d-Qdam of Ramsa; trans. n. 9.

108. The initials of each strophe of this hymn constitute Iso Msiha (Jesus Christ). For an English translation of this hymn, cf. PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection*, 375–376, and for a French translation, MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 72–74, and for an Italian translation, YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica*, 59–60.

109. Cf. MACLEAN, *Offices*, 167–168. For a French translation of the hymn Tu'yay, cf. MATEOS, *Lelya-Sapra*, 74–75; YOUSIF, *Preghiera liturgica* (Italian Trans.) 60.

110. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 35.

111. *Ibid.*, 333, Mawtba; trans. n. 70. Cf. also *Ibid.*, 330, Mawtba; trans. n. 60; 345, Karozuta; trans. n. 162.

and for those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them light shined" (cf. also Mt 4:16), because before the coming of the Saviour, the whole mankind was in darkness, both intellectual and moral, filled with uncertainty and superstition.

Through Christ the eternal Light, therefore, we too become the "children of light" (Eph 5:8) who are called "to share the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). This light which illumines the whole world is nothing but the life of those who follow Christ (Jn 8:12; 9:5). We pray, therefore, on the feast of the Nativity as on all feasts of our Lord:

O Lord, you alone are the Creator of light and the Ordaine, of darkness in your wisdom, and Enlightner of creation through the medium of the sun and moon, your lights, and all luminaries of nights and days which are the work of your hands. To you is due adoration, to you is fitting thanksgiving, because, there is no other God except your Lord of all, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.¹¹²

ii. *Destruction of sin and death*

The Birth of Christ is the inauguration of our salvation which consists in liberation of our souls from the thralldom of darkness of error and sin, from the eternal death, through Christ the everlasting light of God: "He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (Jn 3:8). Jesus born in Bethlehem on that holy night has conquered the evil powers of darkness and given us mortals the hope of eternal life. Christ himself tells us: "Truly, truly I say to you, he who he hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life (Jn 5:24). St Paul writes to the Romans: "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom 5:12). We see, therefore, that sin violated the integrity of the human soul; it disrupted the orderly plan of activity for which the soul had been designed. In lieu of being perfected through activity, the soul's powers have degenerated through their improper and inordinate use resulting in disintegration and death.

Through the appearance of God's Son on earth, 'he has made known to us his high power' and guided us aright through

112. *Ibid.*, 32-33, Slota d-Marya Amleq.

his goodness," and "remitted and pardoned our sins and reconciled us with his Father" and "freed us from error and (from) the Evil One, death and distress and promised us a kingdom."¹¹³ Through this influx of new strength, mankind is saved from sin and its consequences. One of the oniatas d-Basalique of Ramsa celebrates our redemption from sin and death effected through the birth of Christ thus:

The fruit of joy appeared to us from Mary, and it remitted our sins and cancelled our crimes, and went out in search of us and restored our mortality to life, and renewed our nature worn out of sin.¹¹⁴

This is the ineffable good, as Thomas of Edessa says, given to us through Christ our hope,¹¹⁵ and it is this salvation that we are celebrating on the feast of the Nativity. The Babe of Bethlehem through his birth has healed all our spiritual sickness and infirmity and this is sufficient reason for us, as Ephraem says, to solemnize the feast of the Nativity:

Celebrate O Nations, this feast* first fruit of all feasts* recount the sufferings that were* and the wounds and pains* that we may know what plagues * He healed, the Son who was sent * Blessed be he who sufficed to heal our pains.¹¹⁶

iii *Gift of New life*

a. *Divinization of man*

In his Letter to the Galatians, St Paul writes "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman born under the law, to redeem those were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal 4:4-5). This scriptural text, read during the Eucharistic celebration on the feast of the Nativity, expresses the aim of the incarnation of Christ: our adoptive filiation, the divinization of man, which is the glorious aspect of the salvation realized in and through Christ.¹¹⁷ Ephraem throws light on this aspect of divinization in the following words:

113. *Ibid.*, 330, 340, 341, 342, Qanone; trans. n. 104. 106, 119, 131.

114. *Ibid.*, 325, 'onita d-Basalique; trans. n. 36.

115. CARR, *Tractatus*, 19.

116. HNat. XXII, 1; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 109; ET adapted from NPNF XIII, 252.

117. LEMARIE, *Manifestation*, 151.

Two things you sought for * have become ours through your birth: * you have put on our visible body * we have put on your hidden power; * our body has become your clothing, * your Spirit has become our robe. * Blessed be he who has been adorned and has adorned us.¹¹⁸

It is precisely in order to adorn us with his own beauty that Christ has clothed himself with our body. Assuming that which was ours, he has given us his Spirit, his "hidden power" and infused in us his life and thus united us closely to himself:

The Creator established his image in Paradise and the rebel devil corrupted it by jealousy and error. But the wise Painter, in the womb of the virgin, renewed it, and decored it with incorruptible colours....¹¹⁹

Christ, therefore, through his birth from the holy virgin reinstates man in his former glory:

A great wonder befitting God has been wrought today among our earthly race, for He who is the image (dmuta) of God took, in his love, the form (dmuta) of a servant from the holy virgin, so that He might raise up him who was created in His glorious image (salma) because he had fallen from his glory.¹²⁰

The regeneration of man that took place through the birth of Christ is emphasized by Ephraem, who wants us to glorify the God Almighty: "O Mighty One who became a babe in your birth, anew have you begotten me."¹²¹ We mortals are made "heirs in the kingdom, in the new and incorruptible life,"¹²² and therefore we pray:

O Christ, who, in your birth from the daughter of Eve, have dispensed and annulled the sentence that condemned Eve, and promised a new life and good hope and salvation for all the children of Eve, we beseech.¹²³

118. HNat. XXII, 39; cf CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 116; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 255.

119. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 343, 'onita d-Lelya; trans. n. 142.

120. *Ibid.*, 323, 'onita d-Batar of Ramsa; trans. n. 18.

121. HNat. XXIII, 14; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 120.

122. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 333, Mawtba; trans. n. 70.

123. *Ibid.*, 345, Karozuta; trans. n. 165; cf. also *Ibid.*, trans. n. 166.

The feast of the Nativity, therefore, is more than a celebration of Christ's birth, it is also a celebration of our own divinization and rebirth in Christ, of our participation in the divine nature through the baptismal covenant.

b. Redemption of the cosmos

Christ is the Saviour not only of humanity, but he is the redeemer also of the ages and of the whole creation. Creation and redemption are two phases of the same divine plan. By becoming incarnate, the Word recaptures the former and recapitulates it. "The incarnation is the consecration of the cosmos."¹²⁴ Ephraem sees the action of the renewal extended to all creation:

...you Churches also (desire), that he adorn you* He is the Son of the Creator,— who came to renew all creatures. The heavens he has renewed* because the fools worshipped all the luminaries* He has renewed the earth, because in Adam it was wasted* That which he fashioned has become new by his spittle (Jn 9:6)* and the All-Sufficing has restored bodies with souls.¹²⁵

Ephraem writes again:

The creatures complained that they were worshipped* in silence they sought release.— The All-Releaser heard them* and because he endured it not he came down.— He put on the form of a servant in the womb* came forth, set free creation.— Blessed be he who made his creation his gain.¹²⁶

Christ who is born in the grotto announces to us the inauguration of a new world: a new heaven and a new earth where peace and harmony will reign supreme: "Peace on earth, glory in heaven and good hope to all creatures."¹²⁷ Christ "on the day of his birth has gladdened the earth and made heaven cheerful."¹²⁸ The Babe born in Bethlehem is the one who was "eternally born", from the mysterious bosom of his Father and "was shaped with the figure of a servant from the order of corporeal beings,

124. LEMARIE, *Manifestation*, 221.

125. HNat. XVII, 11. 12; cf. CSCO 186, Syr, 82, 89; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 265.

126. HNat. XXII, 35; cf. *Ibid.*, 115; NPNF, XIII, 255.

127. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 349, onita d-Sapra; trans. n, 183.

128. *Ibid.*, trans. n. 182.

material and endowed substantially with speech, and who mercifully saved the material creation and the fourfold elements from submission to sin...."¹²⁹ This theme of the redemption of the cosmos as the fruit of Christ's incarnation is again celebrated in our liturgy:

...And behold! they sing glory to him in the Church which he has chosen for his honour. For through his holy birth he has pleased to renew all creatures, and gave hope and salvation to the whole race of mortals. O peoples and tongues, glorify and thank the Son who liberated everything, because he has exalted our nature; cry out unending praise always to his holy name.¹³⁰

God became man so that we may become divine. Ephraem writes: "... Glory to him, who beheld how we had pleased to be like brutes in our rage and our greediness, and came down and was one of us, that we might become heavenly!"¹³¹ And this is the cosmic dimension of the mystery of the incarnation. Everything is renewed: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5).

iv. *A Feast of Joy*

The experience of newness is a fundamental characteristic of the whole New Testament. We have there mention of a new covenant (Mt 26:28ff.; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8; 13:9, 15, 18), a new teaching (Mk 1:27; Acts 17:19), a new commandment (Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 2:7ff.), of newness of life (Rom 6:4ff.; 7:6; Eph 2:15) and finally a renewal that embraces the whole man and makes him a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10; Rom 6:4; 7:6), in other words, 'a new man' (Eph 2:14ff.). For all those who have been redeemed in Christ, 'everything' becomes 'new' and different (2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21:5). A new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:13) is inaugurated. A new society, a kingdom, a dominion of grace and life in which all receive 'a new name' is set up. And, therefore, on the feast of the Nativity of Christ in whom all this 'newness' finds its highest actualization, we are prompted to 'sing a new song' (Rev 5:9; 14:3) – a hymn of our grateful new existence.¹³² This is the cause of the great joy which is

129. *Ibid.*, Slota d-Sapra; trans. n. 174.

130. *Ibid.*, 332–333, Mawtba; trans. n. 69.

131. HNat. III, 16; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 23.

132. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Christ*, 496.

inaugurated through the birth of the Saviour, and which finds expression through the repeated refrains in the liturgical celebration of the feast of the Nativity: "Glory to you, glorified is your birth." "Glorified are you and glorified is your birth." "Glorified is your birth which gladdens all." "Let the people and (all) peoples glorify him." "Glory to your name, Lord of all." "By all mouths may you be praised."¹³³ This great joy and happiness are announced at the birth of the Saviour: "Glory to God in the heights, and peace and tranquillity on earth and good hope for man" (Lk 2:14).

According to Thomas of Edessa, these angelic words mean to say that, through the birth of Christ, "great hope of destruction of sin and liberation from the powers of devil and demons" are given to us; "the laws of death and incorruptibility are abrogated;" "resurrection to the dead and grace of adoptive filiation" are offered to us; "ascension to heaven and communion with God's saints" are made possible for us. And these heavenly gifts are neither transient nor deficient in eternity, and therefore we rejoice at and celebrate the feast of the Nativity of Christ.¹³⁴

Ephraem makes a comparison between the happiness of those who witnessed the birth of Christ and that of ours who believe in Christ, and concludes that ours is the greater joy:

To that generation your birth gave happiness,
to our (generation) your day (gives happiness):
twofold was the happiness of that generation,
for they saw your birth and your day;
less is the happiness of them that come after,
for the day of your birth they see only;
yet, because they that then were near doubted,
greater is the happiness of them that come after,
who without seeing you believed in you (Jn 20:29).¹³⁵

The feeling that underlies the feast of the Nativity is one of peace and joy, the result of the reconciliation and new unity between heaven and earth. A new hope is instilled in us, because, the fruit of joy appeared to us from Mary and it remitted our sins and cancelled our crimes, and went out in search

133. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 321-323, Qanone d-Marya qretak; trans. n.11-16.

134. CARR, *Tractatus*, 22.

135. HNat. XXIII, 9; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 119; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 256.

of us and restored our mortality to life, and renewed our nature worn out from sin.¹³⁶

And therefore,

leap for joy, O peoples, and rejoice in the birth of Christ, that he, in his mercy, make us worthy of the glory of his kingdom.¹³⁷

The whole world rejoices at the birth of the Saviour and gives vent to its experience of joy:

From the wind the angels from on high praised him with their jubilations; from the East the Magi of Persia carried their gifts and brought to him gold, myrrh and incense, and offered (them) to him as for a king; from the North the shepherds praised him with their jubilations; from the West the sons of promise proclaimed his coming through their prophecy; from the South hurried Egypt and received him with his mother; the earth gave him a cave; the desert bestowed on him a manger; the prophets rejoice, because he is come; the apostles rejoice, because they have seen him...; the gentiles rejoice, because by him they were gathered; and now on the day of his birth the Church and her children cry out praise and say: "Glory to God in the heights, and peace and tranquillity on earth and good hope to men." Christ, O Babe of wonder, have mercy on us.¹³⁸

Our joy and happiness on the feast of the Nativity is great, because we are redeemed by Christ who is, as Ephraem writes in his *Letter to Publius*,

...the gate of salvation, the way of truth, the propitiatory lamb, the purificatory sacrifice, the priest who removes guilt, the purifying sprinkling ... the renewer of nature, who gives life to mortality, who dispels the cloud of darkness, who brings to nought the power of iniquity, who weakens the hand of sheol, who breaks the sin of wickedness, who brings out captives into the light, who raises up those prostrate in perdition, the dispeller of darkness, the establisher of rest, who opens the mouths that are closed, who gives breath to the soul as of old.¹³⁹

136. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 325, onita d-Basalique; trans. n. 36.

137. *Ibid.*, trans. n. 38a.

138. *Ibid.*, 328, Mawtba; trans. n. 52.

139. BROCK, *Ephraem's Letter*, 278-280.

In short, on the feast of the Nativity of Christ, besides the mystery of God's appearance in Jesus, we celebrate our own redemption realized in and through Jesus Christ, who would love today to be born again in our hearts, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as Ephraem reminds us:

In this feast, let each one of us crown – the door of his heart! * The Holy Spirit longs for the door thereof * that He may enter in and dwell there – and sanctify it! * Therefore He goes around – all the doors * (to see) where He may dwell.¹⁴⁰

140. HNat. V, 10; cf. CSCO 186, Syr. 82, 47; ET adapted from NPNF, XIII, 235.

CONCLUSION

The feast of the Nativity of Christ is beyond doubt most dear to the Christian heart, perhaps because of the sentimental associations that have gathered about it throughout the centuries. It has been the cause for the growth and development of a vast and varied folklore, and has become an integral element in Christian civilization and culture. Its annual celebration is looked forward to with the keenest anticipation, and the rejoicing at its celebration is shared by one and all.

The early Church was for a long time content with the celebration of the Pascha viewed precisely as the yearly commemoration of the Salvation in all its phases. And each Sunday was a weekly festival of this same Salvation. Later, the commemoration of the anniversary of the death of the martyrs, the day of their birth into the eternal life, was added, but confined to the place where the martyrs were buried. Pascha or Easter with its completion at Pentecost was, therefore, the only annual feast observed throughout the whole Church. But in course of time Church's theological reflection upon the great events of salvation history very early came to see that the Incarnation was the ground of all that followed, and was itself redemptive, since the Son of God in assuming human nature had renewed and divinized that nature.

In the foregoing pages of this dissertation we have tried to see the development of the office for the feast of the Nativity of Christ in the East Syrian manuscript tradition, and the liturgical theology of the basic themes celebrated on the feast of

the Nativity in the Chaldean and Malabar tradition. The twenty-two manuscripts we have studied reveal that all of them follow the seventh century liturgical reform initiated by Patriarch Iso'Yahb III, (650/651). We see there only very limited variety and development. This shows the remarkable stability of the structure and content of the East Syrian propers throughout the manuscript tradition until their fixation with the publication of Bedjan's *Breviarium* in 1886-1887. As there are no extant Hudra or Gazza manuscripts prior to the reform of Iso'Yahb III, we do not know what was the structure and content of the office of the feast of the Nativity before his time.

Bedjan has not made any alteration in the basic structure of the office of the feast of the Nativity from that of the manuscripts, except for the Scripture lessons, which he does not indicate in the Breviary as they are not part of the office, but belong, as also in the manuscripts, to the celebration of Mass. With regard to the texts, Bedjan has corrected certain hymns, or omitted them altogether, perhaps much more than what the Chaldean hierarchy desired,¹ in order to avoid what were deemed "Nestorian" expressions in the manuscripts. Besides, Bedjan, abbreviated the long night office by suppressing many hymns found in the manuscripts. Likewise, Bedjan prescribed only five hullale for the night office, whereas Darmo prescribes twelve of them, when the manuscripts prescribe the chanting of the whole Psalter. Such minor changes, however, in no way affect the integrity and the spirit of the office, and therefore the text remains basically faithful to the pristine purity of the authentic tradition as found in the manuscripts.

The task of Liturgical theology is a reflexion on worship, specifically the liturgical tradition of worship of a particular Church. The principle "lex orandi est lex credendi" implies that without liturgical theology, our understanding of the Church's faith and doctrine is bound to be partial and incomplete.² With this in mind, we have analysed the liturgical texts of the celebration of the feast of the Nativity in the Chaldean and Malabar tradition, and synthesized the basic themes celebrated on the feast.

1. HADDAD, *Father Bejan*, 75-85 (Hudra), 86-93 (Missal).

2. SCHMEMANN, *Theology*, 15-16.

Despite the apologetical reasons that may have played an important role in the institution of the feast of the Nativity, they did not restrict the ecclesial celebration to mere proclamation of the union of two natures in the unique person of the Son. We have seen, on the contrary, that, this basic aspect of faith being presupposed, the liturgy of the feast of the Nativity celebrates the mystery of incarnation under its various complementary aspects, which, starting from the anamnesis of the birth of Christ in eternity and in time, embrace the whole economy of redemption. In other words, it celebrates the *mdabbrānūṭa* – the divine dispensation – in its entirety, but chiefly under the aspect of incarnation, because the salvific events situated at different points in historical time are one in “sacred time”, with the result that their entire salvific content can be focussed at will on any single one of these successive points in linear time.³ We have seen also that the liturgy of the feast of the Nativity often envisages the mystery of incarnation with its universal import, inasmuch as it is intrinsically and essentially ordained to the renewal of humanity and to the redemption of the entire cosmos: it celebrates and solemnizes in time the redemption which has its beginning in the incarnation of the Son of God. At the same time, the historical event of the birth of Christ is never considered an entity closed in on itself, but is understood and contemplated in its consequences, namely the eschatological salvation which presupposes the rebirth of man in Jesus Christ here and now. The celebration of the coming among men of God in Christ is, therefore, the celebration of the divine life made possible for man in Jesus, so that each one may appropriate the reality of divinization through God’s grace by being born anew.

Today the feast of the Nativity has been so overlaid with sentiment that the true content or object of its celebration is obscured. Often the touching details of the birth of the Baby Jesus at Bethlehem, such as the crib and the straw, the animals, the shepherds and the Magi, are stressed at the risk of missing the proclamation of the meaning of the mystery of the Nativity. It is from the missal and breviary, where the Church gives expression to her faith, that we would discover the real meaning of this feast. It is there we find the object of the feast: what the Church is celebrating and why. From the analysis of the

3. BROCK, *Luminous Eye*, 16.

liturgical texts of the feast of the Nativity, we have seen that the Church views the mystery of the Nativity of Christ in a different and more perfect manner than it is viewed in most popular representations. The commemoration of the historical event of the birth of Christ is indeed in the foreground, but it is presented as both the celebration of the birthday of the Risen Christ, and of our salvation in and through him, which will be completed through his "coming in glory to judge the living and the dead." The full implications and dimensions of the feast of the Nativity include not only Christ's first coming but also his second coming. The feast of the Nativity of Christ is thus a feast of glory, of triumph and majesty. Its ultimate meaning is to be found beyond the confines of the cave and manger, though of course it begins there. For, if the newborn Christ is celebrated at all, it is because of what he is *now*, the glorious King of the Ages.

APPENDIX I

The Hymns and Prayers found in the Manuscripts and in Darmo

We give here the hymns and prayers, provided the text is complete, for the feast of the Nativity in the manuscripts studied and in Darmo, which are not found in Bedjan's office for the same feast, except those that come under the title 'oniātā d-Mawtbā'. The SL NOs correspond to those in the Table I of the Comparison in the third chapter.

1. SL NO. 26 : Slotā d-Bāsāliqē : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 549.

[illegible]

Make us worthy, O our Lord and our God, on this great, chosen and holy feast of the birth of your beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, so that, instead of the offering of the Magi, we may offer before your greatness the acceptable offering of our minds: faith, hope and love; and instead of the shepherds' lambs, we offer you beautiful conduct and good deeds; and so, our alleluia may be mixed with the alleluia of angels, and the voices of our praises and melodies of our songs become delicious

with the chants of the Cherubim and Seraphim, who, in a movement fitting to you, sing "holy" to your divine presence, and we may endlessly offer glory to your Trinity always, Lord of all.

2. SL NO. 27b : 'Onitā d-Bāsāliqē : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 550.¹

ܡܬܬܝܠܐ ܝܚܝܝܕܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ . ܡܕܢܚܐ
ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ . ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .
ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .

Christ was born in the land of Judea, and moved the Magi to go to honour him. They brought offerings, namely gold, myrrh and frankincense (Mt 2:11), which they presented before the infant Jesus, Son of David.

3. SL NO. 28b : 'Onitā d-Bāsāliqē : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 550.

ܐܠܗܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ . ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .
ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .
ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .

The Eternal Being did not become flesh as you think, O (men) hard to persuade. He chose a dwelling in order to hide his splendour, so that the race of mortal might not perish from his sight.

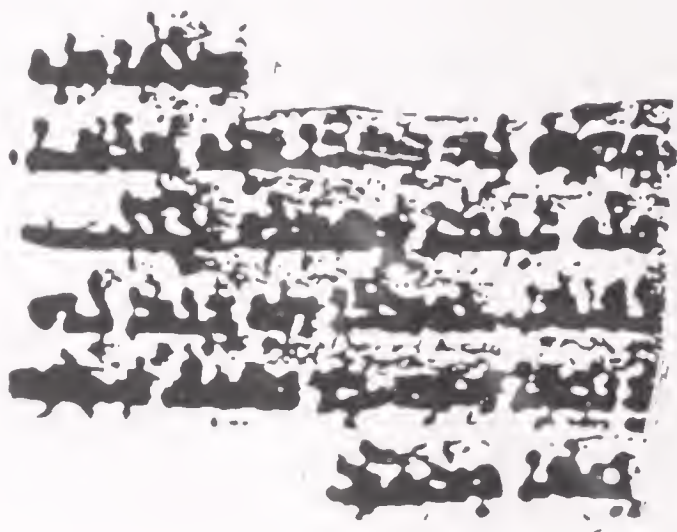
4. SL NO. 28c : 'Onitā d-Bāsāliqē : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 550.

ܡܬܬܝܠܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ . ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .
ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ . ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .
ܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ .

The Word from the Father dwelt in our humanity and saved our nature through the Son who is from Mary. The angels are happy, the Seraphim sing "holy," and the star shows the Magi the grotto of Jesus.

1. Cf. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 113, 'onita d-Mawtba of the 2nd Friday of the Nativity; Ibid., 115, 'onita d-Ramsa of the 2nd Thursday of the Nativity.

Ms V, fol. 13r



It is the Word that became flesh in the womb, and not as those who think illegitimately, a dwelling he chose for himself to hide his glory, so, the race of mortals will not empty him.

5. SL NO. 38a : 'Onitā d-Bāsāliqē : Ms C, fol. 19v.

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Here are all the heavenly ones thanking with us the (eternal) Being who in his love put on our nature and freed us from the error through (his) birth from Mary, and he raised up our fall and made us participate in his honour.

6. SL NO. 38b : 'Onitā d-Bāsāliqē : Ms C, fol. 19v.

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“His name is called Wonder, the Governor” (Is 9 : 6). The daughter of David gave birth to the wonderful Son: Christ, holy of holies, power of the most High, the temple and the one who assumed it, the house and its dweller, but one is the person (parsopa), two images.

7. SL NO. 37 : 'Onitā d-Bāsāliqē : Ms K. fol. 17r.

يصلح حد فقهه و لهذا ولله الحمد و بعون الله
مقامه مستبصر من فيهم و انيت. و عذرتكم لبي عذرتكم
و عذرتكم

All the mouths will cry out praises without end on the feast of the Nativity of Jesus, our Saviour who came in his compassion and liberated us from error, and made us share the knowledge of the Trinity.

8. SL NO. 47b : Hpaktā : Ms A, fol, 19r-20v.

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[illegible]

silk cape, and nobody knows (them), * Mary gave birth just like other living beings and the whole creation was disturbed.

In the birth of the Son the angels sang and resounded glory; * and they proclaimed peace and tranquillity on the earth, and hope to men. * An angel came down and announced to the shepherds * the good news of tranquillity, full of life to the whole world. * It was not the nature hung in the sky, that came down to them, * but a sign which was seen in the star of light. * Like trumpet blows to the creation, his visible birth was proclaiming that eternal birth without beginning. * From the East and from the West assembled to his veneration: the Magi with gifts, and the shepherds with their offerings.

O Child, whose power shook the unjust kings, and indicated and appointed the angels and men to glorify him! * O (Magnificent) birth of Jesus our King who is from the house of David, who moved the Persians to come and to adore him!

The spiritual ones announced good news to the bodily ones: "Come and take freely the document (remitting) your delinquency by the Newborn who appeared." * Twelve kings of Persia with their crowns * bowed their heads and adored in front of the King Christ * He fortified the angels and men to glorify him * and they all together cry and say: "Blessed be your birth."

Covered with the glory of fire, (and) wrapped in swaddling clothes, he is incomprehensible; * he is reclined on his throne and put in the manger, and (he is) never limited. * Come, O my beloved ones, to chant glory on the day of the birth of the King Christ, * and we say and cry again the alleluia of angels who came down in arrays to the earth. * All peoples sang glory on the birth of the Son, and they resounded and said: "Blessed (is) he who in his birth gladdened all!"

Nine months according to the order, * in the womb of flesh he inhabited * and with the suffering and birthpang * came out from that womb of his mother. * He sucked milk like children * to show that he is of our nature. * He offered offerings like all men * in order to pay off the thanksgiving.

He sucked milk, and knees carried him, and the mouth kissed * and he is the one who moved with the children through the streets; it is his the conception and his the circumcision and his the birth, * and he himself is the one who offered the living

offering for our salvation. * The order came out from Augustus Caesar the king * that everybody should be registered himself in his own town, each paying tax; * it was an order of head tax for the cause of the life (ie Christ), and the sons of men of freedom registered. * He called the Magi and asked them in the appearance of love, * at what time was the appearance of the light star, * putting the appearance that 'I may go and adore him', that is why he asked. * Today the angels and men admired in the birth of the Son, and sing glory to the Father who sent him for their salvation.

From the beginning of his formation, he inhabited in Him in love, * he was never separated from Him and will never separate or be far away.* With Him walked that Will who formed him in the womb, and by the power of His power he won every power and reigned over all. * The kings were afraid of this King (who is) full of wonder, and they admired and confessed that he is to reign over all fearful powers. * He flew from on high and stayed on the earth not by nature, * he stood on the earth not by nature, but by name. * And when the God saw the image of his invisibility made dirty on the earth, he sent His Son to save His image with His own 'images' image. * The filthy fox saw the footsteps of the child of lion * and started to burrow a hole in the earth to be invisible.

Make us worthy, O Lord, of that song David sang * And the angels cried with their alleluia, "holy, holy"; * I saw the deacons like angels celebrating the order of hierarchy, all crying "holy, holy, Lord who dwells in the light!" * On this feast, the angels glorified him with their alleluia; * also the earthly ones offered adoration with their holy celebrations. The assemblies of heavens are happy, and also the earthly ones, on the day of the birth of the King Christ, and with us they sing one song, one glory, alleluia.

9. SL NO. 79a: Sabbah of Mawṭbā : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 562.

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birth, and beyond the utterance of angels and men, and indescribable; and for our salvation he abandoned the throne of his glory on high heavens, and came down to us *The heavenly ones sang alleluia and sounded from on high with the voice of horns, of their holy singing. The earthly ones also together offered him adoration with their offerings, with unanimous veneration: the Magi, gold, myrrh and frankincense and perfumes to the majesty of the King; the shepherds brought flesh to Joseph, milk to Mary, glory to the Son!

- ii. Ms A, fol. 20r; Ms D, fol. 23v-24r; Ms G, fol. 24r; Ms L, fol. 25rv, Ms M, fol. 24v; Ms N, fol. 32r; Ms P, fol. 22v; Ms S, fol. 19v-20r; Ms U, fol. 33v.

[Refrain]: Glory to you, because, on the day of your birth you gladdened all.

Bate: Come and rest and be peaceful in the bosom of your mother, O Son of the respectful (people); the earthen vessels are not dignifying to the children of kings; you are the son of David! who was very dignified, and the son of Mary who in her palaces covered your beauty; to whom is like, this happy child, this beautiful newborn, whose mother (is) very chaste, whose father is hidden, even the Seraphim cannot see. To whom you resemble?, tell us, O Son of the Merciful
*The angry who came to look at you, you gladdened them. They laughed together, the rancorous became sweet

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through you, O delicious! Who are you, O child, with you even the bitter became sweet?

- iii. Ms D, fol. 25r; Ms H, fol. 22v; Ms G, fol. 25v; Ms K, fol. 19v; Ms L, fol. 25v; Ms M, fol. 24v; Ms N, fol. 33r; Ms P, fol. 22v; Ms S, fol. 20r.

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Refrain: Blessed is the Christ who through his birth gladdened the earth and heaven.⁴

Bate: Today, O Lord, give joy to the priests, kings and prophets. Their predictions are fulfilled and everything is accomplished in deed. Today, the virgin has given birth to Emmanuel in Bethlehem. The word which Isaiah spoke has been accomplished today (Is 7:14) * This took place there according to the book of census given to his people. The song which David sang has been accomplished (Ps 2:7), and today, the word which Micah spoke has been put into action, because the Shepherd and his pastoral staff for souls came out from Ephrata (Mic 5:2) * A star shone forth from Jacob and a chief was raised up in Israel. The prophecy that was told by Balaam is realized today (Num 24:17). The great light came down and his beauty appeared in a body. The revelation told by Zechariah is splendidly shown today in Bethlehem (Zech 9:9).

4. Cf. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 109, Madrasa of the 2nd Sunday of the Nativity.

iv. Ms D, fol. 23v – 24r; Ms L, fol. 47v – 48r; Ms O, fol. 11r; Ms Q, fol. 68r; Ms S, fol. 48r.

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[Refrain] : Glory to the Father, for the eternity of whom there is no 'father, and to the Son who is (born) of Him, and who is not younger than his generator, and to the Holy Spirit, the nature from eternity.

Bate : In the Nativity of the Son, big disturbance happened in Bethlehem. The angels came down, sounded there. Big thunder!, their voices; because of the sound of that glory, the silent ones came and glorified the Son * The shepherds also came and carried goods of the sheep: sweet milk, pure flesh, wonderful glory. They separated (them), and gave to Joseph flesh, to Mary milk, to the Son glory. The shepherds approached and adored him with their staves * They saluted Him with the peace, as they prophesy: "Peace to you, O Head of the shepherds! This staff of Moses worships your staff, O you who are the pastor of everything."

[**Refrain**] : Blessed is the One who by his birth gladdened
all the creatures and made renewal to our mortal race.⁵

Bate : Jesus our Saviour, on the day of your birth, the Magi rejoiced, offered gifts, kindled fire, and burned incense. On the same day the scribes were gloomy, and the children were killed * Glory to that hidden One whose birth was known; glory to that King whose bed was a manger; glory to that Child whose torch was a star, glory to that bridegroom whose bridal chamber was a cave; glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit * The mother who gave Him birth deserves blessings; the arms that carried him, (deserve) remembrance; the knees that brought him up, (deserve) praise; the manger that was enough for him (deserves) a solemn procession; the cave in which he slept, (deserves) sweet spices; and the village where he was born deserves memory.

iii. Ms H, fol. 22r; Ms K, fol. 19r; Ms L, 24v; Ms S, fol. 19r-v.

[Refrain] : Glory to him who came and
gladdened in his birth the earth and also
heaven and everything in them.

Bate : Permit me, O my Lord, to tell your story with faith, which is wonder. You are truly wonder, and incomprehensible your wonder; in the prophecy you were called wonder (Is 9:6); it is a wonder, full of wonder, a miracle that is fully wonder. Wonder is your conception; wonder is your birth; wonder are you all; unlimited wonder is your power, alleluia * With you I begin, with you I end, and with unlimited trust in you I open my mouth to [speak of] your greatness. Fill me, you, with your treasures, because I am the earth and you are the farmer; sow your voice in the voice of the silent one, you who sowed your power in your mother: a conception without seed who appeared from the Father, and was seen from Mary who (though) never planted, gave fruit, alleluia * Hero of the world, powerful hero, Christ who appeared

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5. Cf. BEDJAN, *Breviarium* I, 98, Madrasa of the 1st Sunday of the Nativity.

14. SL NO. 148 : Nēmar : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 573.

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Three vines came out from the vineyard of the house of Israel: Anna, Mary and Elizabeth. Anna gave birth to Samuel, Elizabeth to John, and Mary to the Saviour of the world. Glory to you, O our Lord, glory to you, O Son of God, blessed (is) he who gladdened us through his birth.

15. SL NO. 144 : Slotā : Ms C, fol. 22v-23r.

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Come, O my Lord, to the help of your worshippers, the vigilers on the feast of your birth, and reveal yourself to us in your mercy, and hear the words of our prayers we are offering to you on your holy feast, O Lord of all.

16. SL NO. 134 : Nēmar : Ms P, fol. 34v.

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He was announced with peace * He was worshipped with joy * He was magnified with gifts * Jesus the Child, the son of David.

O Christ who today on your birthday showed the greatness of your power with wonder star which appeared to reveal his great kingdom, we beseech...

O Christ, today on your birthday the devils are troubled and demons frightened, and the idols felled down, the statutes destroyed, we beseech...

O Christ, today on your birthday the angels sounded glory to God in the heights and announced peace on earth and good hope to men, we beseech...

For the health of our Fathers...

O merciful God...

O Christ who today on your birthday is glorified in heaven by nine legions of angels, and is adored on earth by tens of armies of men,

Save us all we the celebrators of your birth, trusting in hope of your mercy and waiting for the fulfilment of salvation from you, Christ, the Vivifier of the world, and have mercy on us.

19. SL NO. 154a : Qānōnā : Ms H, fol. 25r.

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O Christ, to whom those on high and those below sang glory, let your tranquillity come in all four quarters (of the world) and preserve your Church from the evil and make her worthy to do the commemoration of the feast of your birth.

20. SL NO. 154b : Ms K, fol. 21v. Kārōzūtā.

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O Compassionate, Merciful and Tender (One) whose love is roused over all, pour abundantly the compassion of your goodness

on our souls and answer in your mercy our petitions, O Good, full of mercy.

21. SL NO. 171a : Kārōzūtā : Ms A, fol. 23r.

اللهم من ذممتنا برحمتك وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك

O merciful God who makes us worthy to celebrate the birth of your Christ, let him make us worthy of the glory of his revelation and of joy in his kingdom.

22. SL NO. 171b : Kārōzūtā : Ms A, fol. 23r.

اللهم من ذممتنا برحمتك وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك

That in heaven is glorified without ceasing by nine legions of angels, and on earth is worshipped by multitudes of faithful who venerate the feasts of the Lord.

23. SL NO. 171c : kārōzūtā : Ms A, fol. 23r.

اللهم من ذممتنا برحمتك وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك

Save, O my Lord, your faithful people who celebrate your birth, and make dwell your tranquillity and your peace in your Church, you chose for you, and save your worshippers from deceivers and opponents, O Christ our Saviour, and have mercy on us.

24. SL NO. 171c : Kārōzūtā : Ms D, fol. 27v-28r.

اللهم من ذممتنا برحمتك وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك
وكرمك. وامن نعمك العظيمة وفضلك

In the beginning, the Eternal Being, God who is the Creator, on Sunday, the first day, created and established the eight natures, earth, fire, sky, / darkness, spirit, waters, / angels the seventh nature he brought them out to be / not by voice, but quietly; and in that eighth voice / when he said, "let it be light," the angels wondered in that light / and bowed and worshipped that place, / and all sounded together, / "the Giver of light, Lord..."

Another : Ms H, fol. 25v-26r.

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In the beginning fashioned the light God, the Lord of light, and created the light, and established the light, / he is staying in light and dwelling in light; / the angels wondered in that light / whose light is brighter than light. And its rays brighter than light, and the Seraphim with spiritual / wings flying before that light / and crying out in endless voices, "Glory to Him who stays in light / and dwells in light of his glory; to him is due that we give thanks; we worship / in this Church which is on the earth / and we shout and sing here on earth / with the angels and we sound (sing) with the angels / "Giver of light, Lord..."

27. SL NO. 189 : 'Onitā d-Saprā : Ms A, fol. 25r.

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Raise your voices O sons of the Holy Spirit, and sing praise to the Child full of beatitudes.

29. SL NO. 194b : da-Lbaktā of Saprā : DARMO, *Breviarium* I, 581.

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Not to the Ityā (divine Being) Mary gave birth, as the heretics inimically affirm; nor did she give birth to a man, as Arius falsely pretended; but she gave birth to Christ, as Mar Nestorius confessed. In his glorious birth from Mary, he showed the power of the Most High. The assemblies on high glorify and men here down adore the Star who appeared from Jacob.

30. SL NO. 193bc : da-Lbaktā of Saprā : Ms C, fol. 27r.

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The angels called you 'The Lord', the shepherds named you 'The Child'; the Persians titled you 'The King'; adored are your mysteries, clothed with holiness, O King, God over all: two *kyane* and two *qnome* and one *parsopa*.

The leader of the choir: To the one who unfolds the crowns of the kings, (and) who is born in Bethlehem, the Cherubim chant alleluia, the Seraphim hallow, the angels cry glory to the king from David in whose birth he gladdened all.

31, SL NO. 194b : da-Lbaktā of Saprā : Ms D, fol. 29v.

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Glory to you, O eternal and temporal Child who, through your unity with your Father, are two natures (kyānē) and hypostases (qnōmē) and one person (paršopā) without confusion and without change; you saved our race from error and invited us to the new life; praise to you, praise to you, praise to you, O my Lord, praise to the One who sent you.

32. SL NO. 194b : da-Lbaktā of Saprā : Ms F, fol. 21r-v.

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Mary says, the words of the angel Gabriel came to be realized and were confirmed. And she accepted the pregnancy without marriage as he said, and gave birth to the wonder son who marvellous all and who with his revelations illumined the darkness of the world, and took off and dispelled the error from the earth. The star of light shone from on high and illumined / and showed that the ray that illumines all appeared. The angels of high gave glory to his name and sang, preached and assured through his birth good hope to mankind. / The Magi of Persia before every nation sang to his worship, / and by gifts and their glories worshipped him.

SL NO. 223b : (ii)

دَلْمَه جَمَه . مَتَبَه قَدَم مَه طَل حَتَمَه
 اِنَّا جِه نَكَمَه

It is good weapon to his receivers, he can save from every evil.

39. SL NO. 214 : Bātē : Ms T, fol. 32v.

سَدَا لَه مَه
 بَعْدَه مَه مَه مَه مَه مَه مَه
 قَسَمَه مَه مَه مَه مَه مَه مَه
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On this day fell down and was destroyed the horn of Satan who saw the second Adam born without pain (?). The powers on high gained knowledge of hidden things.

SL NO. 216 : d-Bēm (fol. 33r).

مَعْدَه مَه
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d-Bēm : The forgiving body and the blood which are offered by us today, may they be, O Lord, to the mercy and forgiveness, so that we can cry out and say alleluia always. **Bate** : On this day, the chief of days, come to adorn ourselves with virtues and give glory and thanksgiving to Jesus whose birth gladdened the creation, and we cry out and say, "alleluia, alleluia."

APPENDIX II

Ms Brit. Mus. Or. 4399 (1488/89 A.D.)

We give here the Syriac text of the first two Mawtbe of Lelya for the feast of the Nativity from the Ms Brit. Mus. Or. 4399 (Ms L), the earliest Gazza Ms we have studied. As we have already mentioned (see 126–127 above), the Gazza Mss very often differ from each other especially with regard to the section of oniatā d-Mawtba (see Appendix III).

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APPENDIX IV

Ms Vat. Borg. Syr. 60: Its Contents*

Leaves 440; size 47cm & 30 cm; Year 1999 of Greeks (1688 A.D.)

- fol. 1v. The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.
- fol. 54v. Second Friday after Nativity and Commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- fol. 90v. The Feast of the Epiphany (Denḥa) of our Lord.
- fol. 121v. Commemoration of St. John the Baptist.
- fol. 143v. Commemoration of Sts Peter & Paul.
- fol. 168r. Commemoration of four Evangelists.
- fol. 188v. Commemoration of St Stephan the Proto-Martyr.
- fol. 206r. Commemoration of the Greek Doctors: Diodorus, Theodore and Nestorius.
- fol. 235r. Commemoration of the Syrian Doctors: Ephraem, Narsai, Mar Abraham, Mar Lulyané, Mar John, Mar Michael and others.
- fol. 250v. Commemoration of any one saint (dukrānē d-ḥad-Parṣopā).
- fol. 302r. Friday of the Commemoration of the departed (dukrānē d-‘annidē).
- fol. 322r. “Written for the glorious Church of Mar Geevarghese and of the sons of Shamuni of the blessed village Pioz, under the care of the chosen presbyter Hanna and all the sons of the village, paid from the property of the church – may Christ pardon all of them. This Book of Gazza is completed in the year 1999 of the blessed Greeks [1688 A.D.], in the days of the common father Mar Elia, Catholicos, Patriarch of the East, with the hands of the priest Geevarghese of Alqos in the much blessed Alqos.”
- fol. 322v. Friday of the Commemoration of Confessors.
- fol. 337r. Commemoration of Mar Geevarghese the Martyr.
- fol. 365r. Commemoration of Shamuni and her (seven) children
- fol. 375v. Feast of the Ascension of our Lord.
- fol. 391v. Commemoration of St Thomas the Apostle.
- fol. 399r. Commemoration of Mar Kuriakose.
- fol. 410v. The Feast of Transfiguration of our Lord.
- fol. 423r. The Feast of the Adorable Cross.

* See 91, n. 40 above.

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

“This study on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ is an invaluable instrument to discover the riches of the mystery of the incarnation as the foundation of the mystery of salvation. The members of the Chaldean and Malabar Churches, who have the East Syrian tradition as their proper liturgical and spiritual heritage, will find in this book a precious means for liturgical, pastoral and spiritual ministry as well as for personal spiritual nourishment. Besides, one finds in it an indispensable material for comparative liturgical studies and a contribution unveiling a heritage which is a living part of the Universal Church.”

PETER YOUSIF

*(Professor of East Syrian Liturgy,
Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome;
Director of this Doctoral Dissertation)*

“This book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Chaldean and Malabar Church Year and is especially valuable in that it makes available for the first time a translation of the entire “proper” for the Nativity season, one of the two basic poles of the Christian year. I do not need to stress how useful it will be pastorally, for meditation on this mystery within the proper context of the official prayer of the Church, for the preparation of the liturgical celebrations themselves, and for preaching, to have these essential liturgical texts accessible in English, texts which hitherto have been available, for the most part, only in Syriac. Not only the members of the Churches that celebrate this liturgy, but all those interested in understanding and preserving the eastern heritage of the Universal Church, will welcome this study, especially for the texts it makes available and for the study of their variants in the manuscript tradition.”

ROBERT TAFT S. J.

*(Professor of Eastern Liturgies at the
Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome, and at the
University of Notre Dame (USA))*